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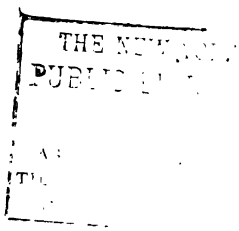
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A TYPICAL WESSEX COTTAGE

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PREFACE

Wessex, which is very largely the county of Dorset, is one of the most interesting and picturesque regions in the south-west of England. Still far behind the times as regards the modern stress and hurry of life, and even also as regards its thought and progress towards up-to-date modernity, it offers unique attractions for the student, archæologist, and traveller of the old and truer type. The tourist of the more modern kind may perhaps find the district "slow," but of its picturesqueness, and not seldom romantic beauty, there can be no two opinions.

Wessex presents a variety of life, character, and scenery which nowadays is all too rare, owing to the levelling-up, or, as some would have it, levelling-down, processes of modern times. This portion of England, which Thomas Hardy has so vividly described, to the enchantment of thousands, invites attention and study like some beautiful low-toned picture. In its peaceful vales it is still possible to forget the town, the fret and fume of city life. What more can a modern pilgrim

of the thoughtful type desire, when this same quietude is wedded to beauty and much of old-world simplicity?

By some strange chance the term Wessex, as denoting that portion of southern and south-western England which in Saxon times formed the kingdom of the West Saxons, almost disappeared from the language and lost significance, becoming a mere historical term. It was left to the genius of a Wessex-born novelist and poet, Thomas Hardy, to revive the name in 1874, and by such reincarnation to arouse a keen and ever, though slowly, increasing interest in the "fayre land of Wessex," its people, and its scenery.

It is this portion of England that the present volume seeks to describe by means of the pictured and printed page.

C. H.

BOURNEMOUTH, 1906.

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MAP AT END OF VOLUME

WESSEX

CHAPTER I

WESSEX IN BRITISH, ROMAN, AND NORMAN TIMES

In Wessex remain many memorials of those ancient days when triremes swept across the blue waters of the Channel from too-adjacent Gaul, and landed their invading legions upon the yellow sands of our south-western shores; and of the time when the piratical Danish galleys, daring much, crossed the bar off sickle-shaped Studland Bay, and swept up the shoal-waters of Poole Harbour to attack the then important town of Wareham.

History is, alas! almost silent regarding the Wessex of the Roman occupation; but every now and again, when the new order comes to further replace the old, when the ploughshare is for the nonce driven yet more deeply than its wont into the rich Wessex loam, or when the sinews of those who dig foundations for twentieth-century buildings in soil undisturbed for ages tauten under the strain of their labour, traces of that wonderful age are discovered, from which it

is possible for the archæologist in a measure to reconstruct the dead past.

On the wind-swept, sun-tanned hills above Studland, with its memories of storm-driven Danes and wrecked Armada galleons, were buried, amidst the lonely majesty of Nature and in the vast silence, Saxons and Romans alike—side by side in the same graves. And at Dorchester many Romans lie beneath the streets and houses; and in the fields their bones and ornaments, their pavements and their pottery—poor relics of the greatness of unexampled conquest by unequalled conquerors—are still often found.

One may well imagine the barbaric splendour of the Roman occupation from the portions which have been from time to time discovered of their villas, and from ornaments, both domestic and personal; and, when viewing the uncovered sites of villas and pavements at Dorchester and in other parts of the district, conjure up a vision of the Wessex of ancient times, when Roman legions marched through the land from city to city or from camp to camp.

Durnovaria of those times was doubtless very different from the Dorchester of these latter days; but, as Mr Hardy once said, "it lay under the rays of the same morning and evening sun which rises and sets over it now." And it would be interesting to reconstruct, if only in imagination, the "very fayre" town, which was graced by beautiful buildings, and the passing to and fro of Roman dames and lords, possibly often bound for the amphitheatre, which lies just

outside the present town, now a grass-grown record of the past, and of Roman games and gladiatorial sports—till the middle of the eighteenth century the place of public execution.

To the north-west is Poundbury, probably a Danish camp, and stated by Camden to have been the work of Sweyn during the siege of Dorchester at the commencement of the eleventh century. But from the formidable nature of the entrenchments it seems possible that Poundbury, at least in part, is yet another relic of the days when Romans dwelt in the land, and their legions needed camps for protective purposes.

Maiden Castle, the finest of British earthworks in the south, if not in all Britain, but two miles outside the town which has known so many masters, remains an imperishable record of pre-Roman times—a great hill-fort round which, in the stirring days of times past, must have waged many a fierce and bloody encounter.

It appears probable that Christianity was introduced into Wessex very early in the days of the first missionaries to Britain, although the records are extremely scant. But the discovery of what has been termed "the earliest known emblem of Christian faith in Britain" at Frampton, some four miles to the north of Dorchester, in George III.'s reign, lends colour to the assumption by some authorities that Christianity existed as a new faith in Wessex even during the life of St Paul himself. Be this as it may, worked into the design of an exquisite piece of Roman tessellated

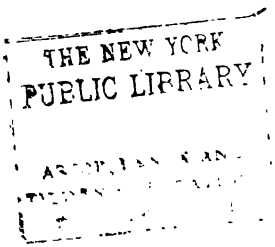
pavement was found the emblem Chi-Rho (or first two letters of Christ's name), so often used as a mystic or masonic symbol amongst the early followers of the Redeemer. The fact that there were present in the same piece of pavement an inscription to Neptune and a representation of the head of that deity is probably merely indicative of the love of ornament, and possibly of old associations, which the owner of the house possessed.

The coming of the Romans meant much to Wessex, and the inhabitants appear soon to have accepted the not harsh rule of the conquerors. The original occupiers of Poundbury, Maiden Castle, and the score of other camps spread through the length and breadth of the countryside must have regarded the civilisation of their conquerors with much the same amazement as a Central African would the highest scientific discoveries of the present day. Of the lasting benefit of this occupation many traces remain, not alone in relics of the past, but in the books of early national history, whose pages, written mostly in blood, yet record heroic deeds begot of Roman influence, and evidences of material progress in the arts of civilisation.

Amongst the benefits derived by the conquered were the magnificent main roads, the Via Iceniana (Icknield Way), and subsidiary roads which were cut through the forests and over the downs of the West—the first-mentioned linking up Sorbiodunum (Old Sarum), Durnovaria (Dorchester), and Exeter; with vicinal ways such as the Fosseway to Ischalis (Ilchester) and

NEAR MAIDEN CASTLE, DORCHESTER

A scene in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*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Clavinium (Jordan Hill, near Weymouth): and what has not inappropriately been called "the spirit of order," which did much, not alone to convert a distracted and chaotic district into a prosperous and peaceful one, but also to initiate better dwellings and more commodious and better-planned villages and towns.

Sprinkled throughout the countryside were also fine villas of the Roman nobles, serving not only to give a sense of security to those dwelling in the immediate vicinity, but exerting an influence towards culture and art. To these beautiful abodes of the Roman colonists came some of the first missionaries from Gaul, welcomed by many of the best sons and daughters of Rome who had been left behind to hold the conquered land when some of the conquering legions had been withdrawn on service elsewhere. Throughout Wessex remain memorials, in fragments of walls, pavements and bridges, showing how widespread this occupation was in both its extent and effect. Near Weymouth are two bridges spanning streamlets, over which nowadays the ploughboy and villager pass to and from their work, which fifteen hundred years ago were trodden by the sandal-shod feet of Roman patrician and soldiery. In their still almost perfect arches they provide yet one more example of the truth of Hippocrates' aphorism: "Ars longa, vita brevis."

One can imagine, indeed, that the inhabitants of Wessex regarded with profound regret the departure of the Roman legions from their shores in A.D. 436, although many private citizens of Rome remained

behind, as well as merchants, and others who had married into British families. The genius of John Everett Millais has shown us something of what that momentous setting forth of the men who had held sway over Britain for a period approximating five centuries was like. In Millais' picture a background of the coast between Weymouth and St Alban's Head appears; but it is by no means certain that the legions had their point of embarkation on the Dorset seaboard. Indeed, several authorities on this very obscure period of our national history place the spot in Hampshire.

Those left behind—those who had for many years abode with a sense of security which the presence of the veteran troops of the conqueror produced, and the order which had arisen out of chaos intensified—doubtless heard the tramp of the departing soldiery, and saw the standards and panoply of Roman military power disappear along the roads to the coast, with feelings of unmitigated dismay. A people with as yet but the crude elements of a nation was left once more to its own resources—it might even be, left as a prey to any foe who might descend either from the east or from the south upon their shores.

No more would these shores know the pomp of Roman circumstance; no more would Roman galleys sweep across the blue stretch of sea which divided Britain from Gaul; no more would their prows ground upon the sandy shores, and Roman hosts prove stern conquerors may be, but by no means hard taskmasters of the conquered.

Saxon Invasion of Wessex

Rome and its power, its culture, its magnificent achievements in art and engineering, were gone. The people of Wessex were left face to face with the future, were it to prove grey or golden.

Though doubtless fearing much, the British inhabitants of the district, not yet called Wessex, but which, for the purpose of avoiding confusion of sense, we may well refer to as such, were left at peace for a period of four decades ere the landing of Cerdric and Cynric, two Saxon lords, upon the Hampshire coast inaugurated a new era of battle, bloodshed, and conquest. After a decisive victory, or, as is supposed, a series of engagements of varying magnitude, in which they succeeded in making good their possession of the country immediately surrounding Winchester, the invaders' lust of conquest increased, and they marched with their victorious followers westward into Wessex. Their progress was met and barred by a stubborn resistance. The British had learned much from their Roman conquerors both of the arts of peace and the arts of war, and fortunately had preserved their primitive courage, daring, and physical stamina unimpaired by the vices and luxuries of the Roman settlers. So stubborn, indeed, was the resistance offered to these new conquerors that nearly a hundred and twenty-five years were occupied in the subjugation of the south and south-west of England. The record of at least one sanguinary and stoutly fought battle is to be found in the old chronicles, for a mention occurs of the slaughter of upwards of two thousand of the

inhabitants of the district, afterwards to be consolidated into the kingdom of Wessex, at Bindon Hill, a detached and steep portion of the chalk downs of the Isle of Purbeck.

During the period of which we write, the south of Britain was invaded in turn by several tribes of roving conquerors, chief amongst whom were the Jutes, Engles or Angles, and the Saxons proper, who in turn, after landing, seized by force of arms a portion of the country, which during ensuing years they either lost or added to by strife amongst themselves as well as by encroachments upon and conquest of the original possessors. Ultimately all these invaders became consolidated, and with the native inhabitants became the people of the kingdom of Wessex.

However, ere this was brought to pass Wessex was devastated from time to time, and the Saxon invaders proved ruthless in their destruction of evidences of their forerunners, the Romans. An inferior people both as regards general civilisation and knowledge of the beautiful and mechanical arts, they regarded with contempt the fine public buildings, private dwellings, and methods of government which the Romans had bequeathed. So ruthless, indeed, does the destruction of these things appear to have been, the wonder is that Wessex possesses so many indications as it does of the Roman occupation and its fruits. But notwithstanding these adverse circumstances, the district undoubtedly became one of very considerable importance, many of the Saxon kings and leaders having been buried in

that portion of it now comprised within the borders of Dorset.

The early Saxons did their utmost to extinguish the Christianity which had been introduced by missionaries during the occupation of the country by the Roman legions. But after a period of nearly a century and a half Christianity was reintroduced by Aidan and a small band of followers; later they built churches, and throughout the land interesting evidences still survive of their architectural methods, in the buildings and remains of churches which are dotted about the countryside. It would appear that much of the rough material for these came from the ruins of Roman houses and buildings, and not only was Roman material used, but to some considerable extent likewise Roman architectural features.

In this wild land, deluged with blood, burned and ravaged by internecine wars, torn by constant battles, there was little peace even long after the reintroduction of the Christian faith. But with the coming of St Aldhelm, nearly three-quarters of a century later, the people of Wessex appear to have many of them abandoned Woden worship; and the foundation of the bishopric of Sherborne, of which St Aldhelm became first bishop, in A.D. 705, and of the monastery at Wimborne during the next decade by Cuthberga, saw the purer faith of the missionary bishop and his followers firmly established.

The coming of the Danes, whose galleys, bound westward, swept down Channel past the Kentish and Sussex

coasts, must have struck terror into the hearts of the people of Wessex as they watched them, from promontory and hillside, and perhaps from the shelter of the pine-woods along the Hampshire shores, turn coastwards in search of inlets and creeks in which to find harbourage and landing-places. Against these marauders of the fourth decade and ensuing years of the ninth century, who threatened not only the liberties but the growing Christian faith of the people, Æthelwulf, and the Christian bishops Swithun of Winchester and Althstanus of Sherborne, waged a heroic and in a measure a successful struggle, in that they were able to drive back the Danish pirates westward beyond the river Parrett.

But from time to time the invaders returned, and fresh hordes of them descended upon the sandy beaches of western Hampshire and extreme eastern Dorset. Wareham, of all Wessex towns, seems to have borne the heaviest brunt of their attacks. Well fortified, and possessed of magnificent quadrangular earthworks, it resisted stoutly the savage attacks of those who swept up the harbour from the sea, and beached their galleys in the creeks and shoals of the Wareham Channel. The town in which Beohrtric, king of Wessex, lay buried was early in Wessex history a place of importance, and, when it fell into the hands of the Danes, formed an invaluable base from which they were able to conduct military operations and raids into the surrounding country.

The rise of Alfred the Great in 871, and his genius

ON THE OLD WALLS OF WAREHAM

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in the conduct of campaigns against the invaders, initiated a new era of Wessex history. After several battles and many skirmishes the Danes retired to Wareham, followed up by Alfred and his consolidated forces. Here, seeing that for the nonce further resistance to the Wessex chieftain would be disastrous, the chronicles tell us "they (the Danes) swore upon the holy ring that they would speedily depart from the kingdom." But notwithstanding this solemn pledge, Alfred discovered, not by any means for the first time, that the invaders were not to be trusted. They appear to have retained possession of the town for at least twelve months after promising to depart, at the end of which period some set sail in their galleys westward, whilst others appear to have joined the Welsh in the neighbourhood of Exeter, where they were afterwards utterly defeated by Alfred and his army. The sea-going Danes had proceeded but a few miles outside the confines of Poole Harbour when they were "smitten by so mighty a storm of wind" that no less than a hundred and twenty of their vessels were cast away on the rocky coast between Peveril Point, Swanage, and St Alban's Head, or were driven ashore in Swanage Bay.

This disaster, however, was not the end of Alfred's struggles with the enemy of his people; for after he had defeated the combined Welsh and Danish forces on the western borders of his kingdom, and after peace had once again been made, and his followers disbanded to permit of their return to more peaceful

and profitable avocations, the invaders once more appeared in force at Chippenham. Alfred was compelled for a time to retire amid the marshes of Somerset into winter quarters—waiting, doubtless with keen anxiety for the safety of his people, until spring should come to enable him to once again call to his standard the people of Hants, Dorset, Wilts, and Somerset, and marshal them against their perfidious foes.

At the battle of Edington the Danes sustained a crushing defeat, and were afterwards compelled to make peace upon Alfred's terms at Wedmore.

Alfred, whose great work of freeing the country from the Danish thrall is so indissolubly connected with the Wessex of Saxon times, did not, however, rest content merely with victories over the invaders. To him must be ascribed much of the machinery of government, and advancement in the more peaceful arts of building and agriculture, which had eventually so greatly to do with the supremacy attained by the kingdom of Wessex. Under his wise rule some at least of the chaos and terrorism brought about by the ravaging incursions of the Danes was done away with, and justice, education, and effective work in other departments of the life of the people received valuable and lasting stimulus.

But by the death of Alfred the Great, at the end of the ninth or beginning of the tenth century, was removed the powerful personality which had succeeded as none other before him in keeping the invaders in check. Again Wessex became the prey of the Danes,

and at the dawn of the eleventh century Canute, a greater than all before him, entered the Frome with his galleys, and first devastated and afterwards conquered Wessex, plundering the Abbey of Cerne, and afterwards retiring with his spoil to Brownsea Island, at the mouth of Poole Harbour. Then ensued a further troubled period of Wessex history. In the absence of Canute, who had been proclaimed king in 1114–5, Ethelred the Saxon, his precursor, was restored to the throne. He reigned but a couple of years, and was succeeded by his son, Edmund Ironside, who on the return of Canute divided the kingdom with him. Edmund was shortly afterwards slain at Oxford, and Canute, marrying the widow of Ethelred, became possessed of the whole kingdom.

Canute the Great reigned over Wessex and the adjoining country for a period of seventeen years, and was succeeded by his two sons, who were in turn succeeded by the son of Ethelred and Emma in 1042. Harold II.'s brief reign had little or no influence upon his kingdom, and with his death at the battle of Hastings, nine months after his accession, the new era of the Norman Conquest was inaugurated. Through the half-century which we have briefly detailed Wessex underwent no considerable change or vicissitudes of fortune. Some few churches were built, and Christianity appears to have spread to contiguous districts; but little of the life of this particular period was recorded. We must conclude that the kingdom, being in peace, had, so to speak, entered one of the backwaters

of national existence, where history for a time remained stagnant.

Few traces remain of the Norman Conquest in Wessex, and of these most are of an ecclesiastical character. Two ruined castles of the period, however, remain, in the keep of Bow and Arrow Castle, said to have been erected by William Rufus, which stands on a craggy eminence on the eastern side of Portland, and the magnificent fortress of Corfe. That the former was once a place of some considerable strength and importance is evinced by the fact of its having been seized by Robert, Duke of Gloucester, in the reign of Stephen, for the Empress Maud.

Corfe, built on a solitary eminence in a gap between the lofty chalk downs of the Isle of Purbeck, must have played a momentous part in Wessex history from the earliest times, when the Celt threw up earthworks upon the crest of the hill. Certain it is that the spot was held successively by the Saxon and the Dane, and ultimately proved a ready-made stronghold for the Norman conquerors—a key to Wessex, and a means of overawing the country round about. One can imagine the almost kingly power which was vested in the Constable of Corfe (in early days known as Corvesgate, a name to be revived by Mr Hardy nearly a thousand years later) in those wild, restless days which immediately followed the coming of William the Norman and his "grasping, greedy crew of invaders, both civil and ecclesiastical, who came from Normandy, Gascony, Anjou, Picardy, and Maine." Its importance

is clearly evidenced by the names of those who held it, and the numerous privileges which accrued from its ownership—rights of forestry, venison and the chase, tolls from the fishers of the coast and streams, and tithes from the fruits of the rich land surrounding,—all of which were enjoyed and enforced by the early governors of Corfe.

Then for a time the history of Wessex as well as that of Corfe Castle becomes obscure, although kings and nobles hunted in the chases, and dwelt for more or less brief periods amidst the hills and vales of the beautiful district.

But if history was at a standstill as regards Wessex, the life of the people is more or less discoverable from an investigation of the various Exchequer Rolls, and similar sources of information. From these it would appear that a period of peaceful industry had come to pass—a time in which the primeval forest, so far as it was not required for game-preservation and for other purposes by the Norman lords who held the lands, was gradually brought under cultivation.

The life of the people of Wessex at this period must have been very similar to that of all the villages throughout England; because, although that of different villages and towns might differ somewhat in small particulars, a strong family resemblance is always traceable in the records and other sources of information which we have of country life in mediæval times. Then, strange as it may appear, the villages enjoyed much greater independence of government than later,

and even at the present time. There were few acts of the supreme Legislature in any way relating to village affairs, and so in a large measure these governed themselves. The lord of the manor tried all criminals, and the priests and afterwards rectors looked after ecclesiastical offences and affairs. This, true of England generally, was true also of Wessex, and though there exists evidence that sometimes things were badly managed, the villagers at least had this satisfaction, that no one was to blame save themselves, and that whatever was done was not, generally speaking, at the behest of some far-away central authority, often ignorant of the local needs which had to be met.

In the first two or three centuries which ensued after the Norman Conquest the position of villeins and cottiers changed very materially; the former gradually became free tenants who had their own land and paid rent to the lord of the manor, whilst the latter gradually became enfranchised from the labour of servitude, and worked for wages like the agricultural labourer. In some of the account-books which have been left behind by long-dead ancestors of the Wessex folk of the present time, we find that land about the middle of the thirteenth century and for a long period afterwards was valued at sixpence per acre—rich land, turned in many places for the first time in its history by plough and spade, and from which crops possibly never again equalled were obtained. In those days the land was ploughed three times a year, and the labourer went forth in the pure air of early dawn and returned home

CORFU FROM THE CASTLE SLOPES

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before sunset after a long day's toil. The ploughing seasons were autumn, April, and midsummer; and in the Wessex meads and upon the hillsides teams of oxen drove straight, clean cuts into the soil, from which in good years an abundant harvest was extracted. Women helped in the harvesting, and even with the ploughing, and an old chronicler describes the scene of a farmer's wife "stalking short-coated and with bare feet alongside the ox team, goad in hand." Although pigs and poultry were much in evidence upon the Wessex farms of mediæval times, the chief source of the farmer's wealth was sheep, which roamed the hills and vales almost at liberty, called homeward only occasionally, or when required for shearing, that their rich fleeces might be sent to Ghent and Bruges for weaving into the famous makes of Flemish cloth.

Year by year the prosperity of the village life in rural England increased, and in times of peace nothing was feared save two calamities—a bad harvest, and the pestilence which so often swept through the length and breadth of south-western England, imported from the Continent in goods, or brought thence by some traveller or returning pilgrim.

In the days of which we write, in Wessex, when free from pestilence and the afflictions of drought, there were indeed golden times for even the poorest, for labour was plentiful, wages were high, and most things required for food cheap. A fat pig was to be bought for threepence, and prime beef for a little more than a farthing a pound.

There was also throughout this period of tranquillity,

and throughout that of the French wars, when only dim echoes of kingly struggles came filtering through the Wessex vales, a large amount of gaiety and merriment. Then men were not so greatly hurried in the race for wealth as they now are. The Church gave many holidays in the course of the year, and what with May-day festivities, Plough Mondays, Hock-tide and Shrovetide sports, harvest homes, fairs, and "ales," the inhabitants of the villages had plenty of amusement, and their lives could certainly, if peaceful and uneventful in the larger sense, not be described as dull.

Along the big high-roads from the west would also come parties of pilgrims on their way to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, or to Holywell, London. And although the pilgrims were supposed to be occupied by religious duties, they certainly were not as a general rule of very sad or serious visage or demeanour. Markets and fairs, very similar to those prevalent but three or four decades ago in Wessex, began to prove, as they remained for hundreds of years, a means of communication and knowledge and amusement to the townsfolk where they were held and people from the surrounding country. To these, after a while, came merchants from the larger cities, from south-eastern England, and also from the Continent; and thus into the life of Wessex of those days crept a knowledge of the arts, progress, and doings of the outside world which otherwise it would have lacked.

One old writer speaks of this period of tranquil progress and undisturbed calm as one "when men were

more interested in the cultivation and tilling of the earth, the ingathering of the crops, and to live at peace with their neighbours than in anything outside"—a happy state of things which was only disturbed at intervals by events inseparable from the growth of the nation at large.

Then came the terrible catastrophe of the Plague of 1348, which swept from shire to shire, carrying death and ruin in its course, sparing none, visiting the manor, cottage, and abbey alike. Various estimates of the percentage of mortality exist, and they are all terribly high. It appears likely, however, that seven or eight tenths of all the population was silently and remorselessly swept away. "The dead," says one account, "lay by the wayside as they fell, with no man to give them burial. Birds of prey picked their bones; beasts, tempted, fed upon them, and in turn died. Monasteries were besieged by the stricken, but help, though forthcoming, was often inefficacious. In some towns no man passed along the street from sunrise to sunset. High-roads were deserted, and became as byways through forest wilds."

In Wessex the plague was not less virulent than in other parts, and for many years afterwards large towns lacked half the inhabitants to fill them.

Long before the devastation, however, the religious life of Wessex had received a great incentive by the establishment of numerous monasteries and abbeys throughout its length and breadth—amongst them Malmesbury, Lacock, Monckton Farleigh, and Bradenstoke in Wilts; Sherborne, Wimborne, Milton Abbas, Cerne, Abbotsbury, Ford, and Bindon in Dorset; and

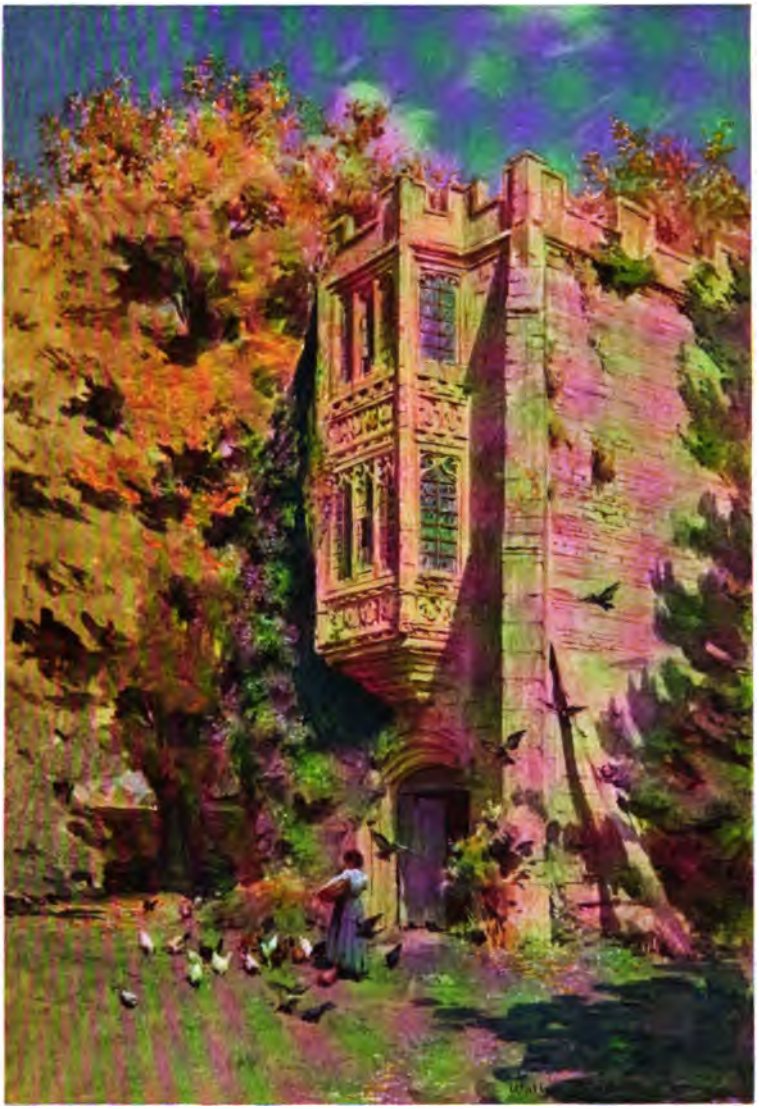
Glastonbury, Cleve, Hinton, Charter-House, Muchelney, Taunton, Stavordale, and Woodspring in Somerset. Here, amid the beautiful scenery so generally chosen by monastic founders for their institutions, lived and died in quietude and peace many sons and daughters of Wessex whose names, unknown to general fame and history, live only in old chronicles and monkish records, as known in their time for deeds of "fayre charitye and benevolence."

During the Wars of the Roses Wessex lay undisturbed by the convulsion which troubled the Midlands and North, save for the visit of Margaret of Anjou, who landed at Weymouth after the battle of Barnet on April 14, 1471, with a party of mercenaries for the reinforcement of Warwick, only to learn that the "Kingmaker" had been slain, and her hopes frustrated. She was received on her landing by one of the most distinguished of Wessex's sons, John Morton, Archbishop of Canterbury and a Cardinal of Rome, who, on learning of the disastrous defeat of the Lancastrians at Barnet, conveyed Margaret and her young son to sanctuary in the Benedictine monastery at Cerne Abbas.

Only far-off echoes of that troubled period of English history, when England was torn by the rival factions of York and Lancaster, appear to have reached Wessex. This western portion of the land seems to have taken but little part in the battles which deluged central and northern England with the blood of her best nobles and sons, although doubtless some Wessex men must have fallen in the struggle which ended with the triumph of Edward IV. at Tewkesbury on May 4, 1471.

THE GATEWAY AT CERNE ABBAS

The "Abbot's Cernal" of the Novels



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CHAPTER II

WESSEX IN MEDIÆVAL, STUART, AND GEORGIAN TIMES

SEEING that in Wessex there were many rich abbeys and monasteries, it is not to be wondered at that, when the time came for the suppression of the religious houses by Thomas Cromwell in Henry VIII.'s reign, there ensued a period of disturbance and even of dismay in Wessex, as well as in other parts of the country.

For many years, as there were no poor-laws, workhouses, or hospitals, the dwellers in these religious foundations, scattered throughout the length and breadth of the country, had been the only means by which those who suffered from poverty, sickness, or privation could gain relief. The attitude of the monks, speaking generally, towards the poor was well summed up by St Bernard in his words: "The friendship of the poor constitutes us the friends of kings, but the love of poverty makes kings of us."

It is certain that until abuses crept into these institutions, which in a measure led to their dissolution in the latter years of the first half of the sixteenth century,

the monks rendered many services not only to the poor but to the advancement of learning and knowledge. All men were welcomed into their ranks, poor as well as rich, for all men were equal who wore the monk's robe. From the monasteries of Wessex, as from those in other parts of the country, were sent forth works of erudition—of history, of criticism ; and records of the doings of their own times were kept with great fulness, and these were stored in libraries, and happily in some instances have been preserved to assist the historians of modern times.

The libraries of these monastic foundations were rich not only in printed and written pages, but also in treasures of beautiful illumination and bindings ; and when in 1539 an Act of Parliament was passed to put an end to the greater monasteries, as had already been done with the smaller, the religious houses of Wessex were plundered with the same completeness that characterised the work of Cromwell throughout the south of England. And although his unscrupulous agents were forced in many instances to report that they could find nothing against the conduct of the institutions they were sent to suppress, the work went on, because, in the words of the despoilers, "the monks would do evil if they could." Thus throughout the countryside noble buildings, distinguished for their beauty of design, and architecture, and situation, were despoiled and given over to ruin and destruction.

Throughout Wessex there remain in most instances

only the veriest fragments of these magnificent institutions, which, although rich enough to tempt the cupidity of Henry VIII. and Cromwell and his satellites, were scarcely too rich, when one comes to consider the widespread charity they often dispensed. On their destruction the property went to the King, who founded a few new bishoprics out of the proceeds, but spent most of the money upon his own pleasures and gratification. The surrounding lands, distinguished for their wonderful and complete cultivation, were given away to his favourites or sold for small sums to the new nobles ; and in Wessex, as in other parts, many of them eventually passed into the hands of laymen, who by this means founded families which rose rapidly in wealth and importance. In Dorset and other parts of Wessex may be traced in many of the families of the nobility of the present day their rise from this period of plunder and spoliation.

A century passed away from the death of the last of the Yorkist kings ere Wessex again looms in national history, as actively and gallantly assisting to defend the southern coast from the attack of the threatening Spanish Armada. Scarcely a fishing hamlet along its shores but contributed in specie or men to the fitting-out or manning of Lord Howard's, Drake's, and Frobisher's fleet, whilst the seaports of Weymouth and Lyme Regis provided both "considerable" ships and men—the former "six bigge shippes and men to man them," and the latter two ships and ninety men.

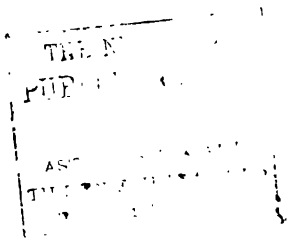
Then was Wessex in a ferment. The trained bands

were mustered, and couriers from the far-off metropolis swept along the roads westward with dispatches for the Admiral of the Fleet at Plymouth, Lord Howard of Effingham, or for the magistrates and sheriffs of the counties of Hants, Dorset, and Devon, urging them to vigilance and organised resistance. And then when at last news of the setting forth of Philip of Spain's proud armament reached them, the people of the inland towns and villages, journeying along high-roads and across country, came to the coast and stood upon the cliffs of Devon and Dorset, and with anxious eyes gazed out across the sunlit waters for the coming of the foe.

"For many days," says an old writer of the time, "they watched in vain, till on the morning of Sunday, July 21, 1588, the great fleet of ships came in sight of Plymouth, sailing slowly up the Channel towards the French port of Calais."

Although not daring to attack the Armada at once with his handful of ships, among which were the *Golden Lion*, *Galleon*, *Sutton*, *Expedition*, *Catherine*, and *Heath Hen*, furnished by Weymouth, Lord Howard set off from Plymouth in pursuit; and when off Lyme the first serious engagement between the two fleets took place, "in sight of a mightie multitude of people" gathered upon "the high rocky hille" above the town. And a like crowd gathered upon the rock-strewn slopes of Portland, and the hills opposite Weymouth Bay, to watch the huge galleons surging eastward "like baited bulls, with the tiny English warships worrying them to destruction."

A WESSEX HAVEN



A few days later one of the huge Spanish ships was brought a prize into Portland roadstead amid scenes of triumph and rejoicing. Several other galleons were, so tradition tells, wrecked along the coast between Weymouth and Swanage, and one filled with treasure drove ashore in Studland Bay.

After the Armada terrors Wessex returned to its quiet and usual state of rural simplicity of life; and only vague rumours can have penetrated of the plots and counterplots which troubled the later years of the great Queen's reign, and the opening ones of her successor. Nor, apparently, did much of the religious trouble arising in Elizabeth's last years influence the life or fortunes of the western portion of her dominions. Many Wessex men served in the various expeditions undertaken against Spain during the years immediately preceding the destruction of the Armada, and not a few sailed far westward to that new world, the northern fringe of which had four years before the coming of Philip of Spain's galleons been settled by Sir Walter Raleigh's colonists.

But although during the forty years which came immediately after the death of Elizabeth only faint indications were seen in Wessex of the coming storm, when it broke, and King and Parliament were in arms against one another, the district was, as it proved, destined to play no unimportant part in the struggle.

Wessex as a whole declared for the Parliament, although some few towns and portions of the countryside surrounding them were Royalist in their sympathies.

Throughout the length and breadth of the fair district of Dorset and its outskirts came Roundhead and Royalist troops, skirmishing and fighting. Obscure villages were startled out of their almost immemorial quietude by the passing to and fro of soldiery, who avoided the high-roads for strategic reasons; and men were called suddenly and only half-knowingly to serve either the King or Parliament, as best fitted in with the political sympathies of the lord of the manor on which they dwelt. By night and by day Wessex roads and village streets rang to the tune of passing troopers' feet, or the sharper note of bodies of mounted men. Lyme Regis early declared for the Parliament, and was successfully defended against the siege operations of Prince Maurice from April 20 until relieved on June 15, 1644, by the approach of the army of the Earl of Essex. In this historic siege the defenders are stated to have lost less than 150 men, although suffering great hardships and being frequently compelled to resist fierce assaults by the troops of Prince Maurice and Lord Talbot, who numbered some six thousand. The besiegers lost in killed and disabled nearly one-third of their forces, and were compelled to retire precipitately on the approach of the Parliamentary army of the West.

A not unquaint side-light, showing how highly the Parliament esteemed the stout resistance of the men—aye, and the women—of Lyme, is thrown by the vote of a gratuity of £2000 and 312 pairs of shoes, with other things, to the inhabitants. The bravery of the women

of Lyme became a household word, and it is recorded that a young girl, whose hand was shot off, declared that she was not alone willing to lose her hand, but even her life, in the cause of liberty.

Weymouth, held at first for the King by Lord Caernarvon and Prince Maurice, afterwards fell into the hands of the Parliament, and was successfully retained, although subjected to a siege lasting nearly three weeks. Blandford was attacked and plundered by the Royalists under Colonel Sydenham; Dorchester was fortified for the Parliament, surrendered to the King's forces, under the command of the Earl of Caernarvon, and was afterwards retaken by the Roundheads under the Earl of Essex, and occupied by Cromwell; Sherborne was held for the King by the Marquis of Hertford against the Earl of Bedford, and was taken by General Fairfax on his victorious progress in the West; Shaftesbury also played no inconspicuous part in the Civil War, being held for King and Parliament by turn. The famous siege of Corfe is referred to elsewhere; it has passed into a wider history than merely that of Wessex, and has been made the central idea of various romances and verses, from the period of the siege down to the present day.

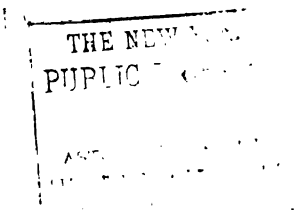
Although in the county of Dorset itself only skirmishes took place, some authorities speak of the conflict of Hamildon Hill, which stands some eight miles south of Shaftesbury, as a battle. It took place on August 4, 1645, between the country folk, who, enrolled as Clubmen, espoused the Royalist cause, and

a Parliamentarian force of about 1000 dragoons, under the command of Cromwell himself. The leaders of the Clubmen had met two days before at Shaftesbury to devise a plan by which the siege of Sherborne might be raised. Their leaders were captured and the conference broken up by a detachment of Roundhead horse sent from Sherborne for the purpose, under the command of Colonel Fleetwood. These latter were attacked by some 10,000 of the Clubmen, who succeeded in rescuing their leaders, and then retired to Hamildon Hill, a lofty eminence well adapted for the purpose of a rally. Here they were discovered by Cromwell, who was marching on Shaftesbury.

No better or more brief and vivid account of this Dorset battle could be given than in the words of the great Protector himself. He wrote: "They refused to submit. The passage (the road to the camp where the Clubmen were) not being for above three abreast kept us out; whereupon Major Desborow (Major-General Desborough) wheeled about, got in the rear of them, and did some small execution upon them. . . . We have taken about three hundred of them, many of which are poor silly creatures, whom if you please to let me send home, promise to be very dutiful in time to come, and 'will be hanged' before they come out again."

From a contemporary writer it would appear that the number of prisoners was some 450, of whom half were wounded; the killed between 60 and 70; and the muskets captured some 600, with 12 white

A GROUP OF COTTAGES AT SUTTON POYNTZ, NEAR WEYMOUTH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standards. Amongst the prisoners were four rectors and curates. Upon the side of the Roundheads, Major Pattison and twelve troopers were killed.

It would appear, although Mr Bravel, Rector of Compton, who was in command of the Clubmen, was a Royalist, the country folk themselves "possessed no clear idea as to whom they were for," but looked upon any troopers as their natural foes. This was the sole engagement of note in Dorset itself, but on the outskirts of the county were fought several severe ones.

During the Protectorate Wessex appears once more to have sunk into a state of tranquillity, from which it was not to be aroused for a period of nearly forty years.

Romance it had in plenty, for did not Charles II. seek its protection after the battle of Worcester, and, fleeing to the West, find refuge in Trent Manor House, near Yeovil, whilst maturing his plans for escape to the Continent? Whilst he lay hidden at Trent, communication was had with one Limbry, the master of a small coaster at Lyme Regis, who consented to convey the fugitive from Charmouth Roads across to France. On the night that was arranged for the embarkation, the wife of Limbry, having her suspicions as to the identity of the passengers that her husband had agreed to convey across Channel, locked him in his room, fearful lest the pains and penalties she had read would befall those aiding Charles to escape should fall upon them. The King, frustrated in his attempt, took horse for Bridport, disguised as a servant, and after having been recognised made his way back to Trent, where, with

Lord Wilmot and other Royalist fugitives, he had already been harboured by the owner, Colonel Wyndham. After many perilous escapes from identification and capture, Charles in the end sailed from the Sussex coast to France and safety.

The next occasion on which Wessex events were destined to be of historical importance was thirty-four years after Charles II. had been a fugitive with a price upon his head along the Dorset coast.

On a bright June day, the eleventh of the month, in the year 1685, a small fleet of three vessels hove in sight off Lyme Regis, and at eight o'clock of that day, James, Duke of Monmouth, landed with some sixty-two adherents and a small body of troops on the Cobb. Thus began one of the most romantic and tragic episodes of Wessex history. The Duke immediately proceeded to the market-place, and there set up his standard, causing a proclamation to be read to those assembled. Afterwards "the royal adventurer" and his staff took up their quarters at the fine old gabled George Inn (which remained standing till its destruction by fire in 1844), where they remained till June 14.

Not only did the news of the Duke's landing quickly spread through the surrounding country, but it reached London within thirty-six hours, the Mayor of Lyme having, immediately the ships had appeared off the Cobb, sped from the town, and sent the news post-haste to Westminster.

The Duke was received with unbounded enthusiasm, flags waved in Lyme, and even the school-children

crowded next day to acclaim him, by which time nearly one hundred young men of the town had enlisted under his banner. By the night of the same day his force had increased to more than 1000 foot, and upwards of 150 horse, many gentry coming to join him—among these, Colonel Joshua Churchill, Captain Mathews, Mr Thomas Hooper, Mr Legge, and Mr Hewling. The town was ablaze with enthusiasm, and rang with the shouts of townsfolk: "A Monmouth! A Monmouth! The Protestant religion!"

On Saturday, June 13, there came to the town one Daniel Defoe, then twenty-four years of age, who was destined to greater immortality, as author of *Robinson Crusoe*, than even the ill-fated master he served through many perilous days and adventures. Into the town from far and near came vast numbers of men, armed with weapons of all sorts, but few with guns, to the number of upwards of 11,000—"more," we are told, "than could be received, for lack of the wherewithal with which properly to arm them."

The action of Gregory Alford, the Mayor—who had not only despatched a letter to King James at Westminster from Honiton, whence he had fled on the Duke's landing, but had pursued his course westward from that place, raising the countryside, and warning the constables of the various villages to summon the *posse comitatus* and the militia to resist the Duke's progress — necessitated Monmouth's advance. In consequence of this he left Lyme with his forces

on Monday, June 15, and proceeded to Axminster. Of cavalry he had little save the country folk mounted upon horses and ponies taken from off the land, and a handful of gentlemen adherents upon their own horses.

Except that here and there a few recruits came to his standard, and some of the more substantial of the farmers and yeomen professed sympathy with his cause (a sympathy which, though it took no more solid form than words, was to cost most of them dear), his march was shorn of all triumph, save at Taunton, and even marked by desertions. In a word, his followers were ill-clad, ill-armed, and by no means fit to cope with the forces which were speedily being arrayed against them.

From Shepton Mallet the rapidly diminishing army marched on July 1 to Wells, and thence to Bridgewater, where they were met by a deputation from Taunton, praying that Monmouth would not return again to that town, which was already beginning to suffer for having received him so enthusiastically a week or two before. From this point, including the march towards Bridgewater and the double back to Sedgemoor, nothing but disaster and discouragement attended the Duke.

The King's forces, under Lord Feversham, after somewhat irregular and ineffectual attempts to get in touch with Monmouth, now lay mostly at Sedgemoor, and it was decided by the Duke's counsellors to attack them by night. One Richard Godfrey was sent to discover the number and disposition of Lord

Feversham's troops, and returned with a true but sadly incomplete report. He stated that they were not entrenched, but he had somehow or other omitted to learn that a deep rhine or great drain, "the water in it about two feet, but the mud enough to drown a man," lay across the track by which Monmouth's men must advance. This omission of Godfrey's (he was not a traitor, as stated by some authorities, but merely a blunderer and unobservant, which is sometimes as bad or worse) cost the Duke the battle.

The two opposing forces were, according to several contemporary accounts, practically equal in numbers, and although Feversham's force was the better armed, there was the counterbalance of a night surprise, had it not been for the rhine. The attack of the Duke's horse failed, and the infantry, eventually finding themselves outflanked, broke and fled. Then, at daybreak or soon after, ensued one of the most relentless pursuits and series of massacres in cornfield, barn, and coppice, under hedges and in ditches, which, only equalled by the bloody work of the infamous Jeffreys a few weeks later, ever disfigured the records of regular troops.

On the field of Sedgemoor itself and in the immediate neighbourhood at least 1200 of the unfortunate followers of "the Protestant Duke" were slain.

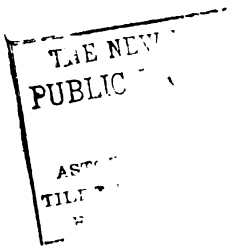
Monmouth himself was now a fugitive, hunted from wood to wood, from hedgerow to hedgerow, from one hiding-place to another. Sheltered by the kindly, hiding by day and travelling by night, he hoped to reach some point on the coast from whence he could

take flight to the Continent. His route was so devious that for many months after his capture the authorities were unable to trace it. From Sedgemoor the Duke and his party fled northwards to Bristol, reaching a spot within twelve miles of the city; and then by various turnings and twistings they arrived at Gillingham, from whence they proceeded to Shaftesbury. Their objective was Lymington, where Colonel Dore, who had proclaimed the Duke, had promised to provide a vessel by means of which the party should escape to France. One Richard Hollyday acted as guide, and endeavoured to reach the New Forest by way of Cranborne Chase, and the more deserted roads of that part of the country. At the Woodyates Inn, about ten miles from Shaftesbury, the Duke disguised himself as a shepherd; and then, after turning their horses loose and hiding saddles and bridles, the small party of fugitives proceeded eastward on foot.

Meanwhile Lord Lumley, who was posted with troops at Ringwood, heard of the defeat at Sedgemoor and the flight of the Duke. He promptly sent off numbers of scouts in all directions, with the result that, early in the morning of July 7, a party of these, riding near Holt Lodge, a few miles distant from Wimborne, saw and surprised at the cross-roads two strangers, and arrested them as suspects. They proved to be Lord Grey and Hollyday, the guide.

The scent had thus become hot, and Sir William Portman, being apprised of the fact, sent his followers to aid in scouring the surrounding district, in the hope

ON THE STOUR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of capturing the Duke himself. A poor woman named Amy or Anna Farrant directed Lord Lumley to a hedge over which she stated she had recently seen two men escape. In the immediate neighbourhood there was much enclosed ground, overgrown by bracken and small trees. This was surrounded by a cordon of troopers and of Sir William Portman's followers, and the search for the fugitive began in systematic earnest, it having been agreed between Lord Lumley and Sir William that, in the event of the discovery and capture of the Duke, the "blood-money," amounting to £5000 for "his taking alive or dead," should be divided between their respective followers.

It is a notable fact that the family of Farrants, after the betrayal, speedily fell into extreme poverty and died out, the cottage in which Amy Farrant lived falling into decay and having an evil reputation throughout the neighbourhood—a judgment, many thought, upon the family for betraying the unfortunate Duke.

The Duke and Busse, one of his followers, a Brandenburger, managed to elude pursuit all day; but about eight o'clock next morning Busse was discovered, and upon examination (and some authorities hint at torture) he admitted that he had left the Duke but a few hours before. That he betrayed his companion is scarcely to be doubted, as he was pardoned on December 30, although guilty of active revolt against King James; whereas many who had not even been within sight of the Duke's forces were ruthlessly slaughtered or sent to the plantations as slaves.

The unfortunate fugitive was discovered hiding amidst the bracken in the north-eastern portion of the enclosure, which was then known as the "Island," now as Woodlands Farm. His discoverer was one Henry Parlins, a servant of Samuel Rolles, Esq., who, upon Monmouth making as though to resist capture, called out and summoned to his assistance two Sussex troopers.

The wretched prisoner was conducted to Holt Lodge, the home of the Ettricks, hard by, and was committed by Anthony Ettrick, a magistrate. Upon the Duke's person Sir William Portman found various books and papers. Amongst the former was a MS. of spells, charms, and recipes, songs and prayers in the Duke's handwriting, most of which had reference to preservation from harm in battle.

Monmouth and his companions remained at Ringwood for a couple of days, lodging at a house just on the townward side of the bridge, from whence he wrote his letters of appeal both to the King, the Queen, and to the Earl of Rochester, whom he had known in former years at Charles II.'s court. The letter to the Queen was a piteous effusion, couched in anything but dignified language; and, indeed, the whole tenor of the letters written from Ringwood was such as did the writer little credit—although, as a contemporary diarist says, "some excuse must be found in the low state and condition of the Duke both in mind and body when captured, he not having had one full night's rest since his landing

at Lyme." From Ringwood the unhappy prisoner passed out of Wessex, leaving behind him his devoted adherents literally to reap the whirlwind.

The "Bloody Assize" is almost the only other historical event in which the history of Wessex impinges upon that of the nation. Elsewhere some of the results of the ruthless acts of revenge taken by James II. in Wessex are referred to, in descriptions of districts and towns in which they took place. Here it is only necessary to give a brief picture of the passing of the storm across the face of the "fayre land of Dorset," as it is described by a contemporary writer. The infamous Jeffreys' whole progress throughout the West might have been traced by the carnage he left behind him. "Every tower and steeple was set round with the heads of traitors. Wherever a road divided a gibbet served for an index; and there was scarcely a hamlet, however obscure, to which one limb at least was not sent, that those who survived might never lose sight of their departed friends, nor the remembrance of their crime or punishment."

Under the scourge of Jeffreys' unbridled passion and cruelty the beautiful land of Wessex was made literally to run with blood. "He made all the West an Aceldama; some places quite depopulated, and nothing to be seen in 'em but forsaken walls, unlucky gibbets, and ghostly carcases. Nothing could be liker Hell than all those parts; nothing so like the Devil as he."

In the wooded vales, upon the uplands, by lush

mead, along the high-roads winding from town to village and again to town, at market cross and cross-roads, were evidences, in mangled bodies and burnt-out homes, of the tender mercies of the cruel. And craven James, who three years later was to flee from the kingdom, conveyed his approbation to his instruments for the slaughter and devastation wrought in his name, and specified in a warrant issued to sheriffs of the counties the horrible customs (even to the tarring of the dismembered bodies after quartering) which were to be gone through.

With the landing of William of Orange at Torbay in November 1688 a period of peace and undisturbed if not remarkable progress prevailed in Wessex. What has been justly called the Reign of Terror was slowly but surely forgotten, and the life of Dorset and the contiguous counties resumed its placid character. People in time forgot the nightmare horror of 1685; and, although "the ghostes of those slayne and set up at cross-roads and gibbeted upon the downs still were said to walk, to the terror of persons afoot after night-fall," the quiet country life, only marked by spring, summer, autumn, and winter—of seedtime and harvest and purely local events, was once more resumed, and continued uninterrupted.

The next great happening which stirred Wessex was of a very different nature, and was attributable to the revival of religion brought about by the Wesleys.

It was to the little village of Preston, near Wey-

mouth, that John Wesley, the elder, the grandfather of the great John Wesley, came when deprived of his living owing to his refusal to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity. In 1743 Charles Wesley, on the road from Cornwall to London, broke his journey at Bridport, and this visit may be said to have been the commencement of the Methodist revival in Wessex. The itinerant preachers who were soon found journeying through the district, and their converts, met with much persecution, and were at first literally, as was the One whom they sought to serve, "despised and rejected of men." But the new faith spread, and, humble though the originators of it were, they proved true servants of the Gospel they preached, and their influence upon the poorer classes of Wessex was far-reaching, and accomplished much lasting good.

Many a romantic story could be told of conversion of not only the placid-lived labourers inland, but of the wilder spirits of the coast fishing hamlets—men who combined with ostensible fishing the less reputable and lawless occupations of smuggling and even wrecking. Throughout the length and breadth of the land the wave of revival spread, and in many a chapel register and minute-book are to be found evidences of the influence that the Wesleys and their tours of ministration exercised upon the people and their lives.

The district was not free from anxiety during the scare which the possibility of invasion from "Boney"

caused throughout the whole of the south and south-western counties. Once more the roads of Wessex rang beneath the hoofs of large bodies of cavalry, and Wessex dust rose in thick clouds beneath the feet of marching regiments of foot bound coastward to Weymouth, where the troops encamped upon the hills to the north-east of the town, "to the gratification and interest of all the townsfolk, their wives and daughters." Beacons were erected upon the cliffs and the higher inland hills from Beachy Head to Start Point, and those of Dorset were not less numerous than of neighbouring counties. "Sometimes," says a contemporary writer, "these would become ignited by accident, or by the fright of their tenders, and the whole countryside would be thrown into a ferment of terror, with the militia and yeomen a-gallop, and the villagers a-tremble lest the French should have landed on the none too distant coast."

Of the Wessex of to-day one may in a measure write as little altered from those stirring times of the first quarter of the last century. Progress, of course, there has been; but it has not destroyed the old-world charm of scenery almost unspoiled by modern buildings in the villages, or by too numerous and insistent railway lines. The placid life goes on in the hamlets and vales of Wessex, the dialect remains almost unalloyed by modern phraseology, and types such as then walked and laboured on farm and upland downs, sowing and reaping crops, tending sheep and cattle, are still existent.

BATHFORD, WILTS

THE NEW
PUBLIC
AS
TIL

The Wessex of To-day

At sunset and at dawn the familiar noises of farmyard and byre, which time leaves unaltered, come to the wanderer in Wessex across the fertile "vale of the great dairies," and stir to life in one's imagination scenes not only from the Wessex of romances and novels, but from that of the past.

CHAPTER III

SOME TOWNS OF EAST WESSEX

THE larger towns of Wessex seem to group themselves naturally into those of the eastern, western, southern, and northern parts of the district; and in many instances the towns in these particular groups are more or less intimately connected by historical and other events.

Wimborne, the first in the group of East Wessex towns, is situated in the picturesque and well-wooded valley through which flow the two rivers, the Stour and the Allen or Win, the former on the south and the latter on the east side of the town.

Wimborne is one of the "old-ancient" towns of Wessex which, of considerable importance in olden days, has only of quite recent years regained some of the prestige which it lost on the abolition of the monasteries and religious foundations of the county. Its chief life even now is more of a rural than an urban character, and the atmosphere of the little town is tinctured with that placid and untroubled ease which distinguishes the deliberate flow of the two streams upon which it stands.

Its history has been far less eventful than that of

most Wessex towns of equal size and importance; but in the far-off days of the Anglo-Saxon invasion it must have caught at least a murmur of the fierce battle which in A.D. 520 raged between the Britons under Arthur and the Anglo-Saxons under Cerdic at Badbury Rings, about three and a half miles to the north-west of the town. And another stirring time for ancient Wimborne occurred some four centuries later, in A.D. 901, when it was seized by Ethelbald, a cousin-german of Edward the Elder. The latter marched against Ethelbald, and encamped with a large force in Badbury Rings. On the approach of the king, the rebel, with a handful of followers, fled to join the Danish invaders in Northumberland. The chroniclers state that whilst at Wimborne Ethelbald took his wife out of the nunnery there, returning her thither on his flight!

This, so far as stirring history is concerned, is Wimborne's record. But that it was a place of some considerable size in Roman times is attested by the fact that it was a military station, and was named Vindogladia.

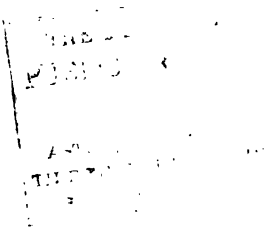
Comparatively early in the history of the introduction of Christianity it acquired importance from the nunnery founded about 700 by Cuthberga, who was afterwards canonised, and was a sister of Ina, king of Wessex; in which nunnery, we are told, "she macerated her body with almost continual watchings and fastings," permitting "her body to enjoy no rest, but importunately day and night her prayers sounded in the ears of a merciful God."

A change was, however, made a century or so prior to the Norman Conquest, when the "meek and prayerful" nuns were replaced by secular canons; and it continued a collegiate church until the Reformation. One person at least of note was dean of the foundation, Reginald Pole, afterwards created archbishop and cardinal. He held the office of dean in 1517, at the early age of seventeen.

From the time of the Dissolution and Reformation the importance of the minster church at Wimborne decreased ecclesiastically, though it fortunately remained as an excellent example of Norman, Transition-Norman, Early English, and Decorated architecture. In the reign of Queen Elizabeth the foundation, consisting of three priests, with a staff of "singing men" and choristers, came into being, and this exists to the present day.

Wimborne without its minster church would be of little interest nowadays; but the splendid pile, which has in its time served the dual purpose of a collegiate and parochial church, is singularly interesting and even impressive in character. Its two towers, the earlier one, at the intersection of the cruciform, of Transition-Norman work, and the later, at the western end of the nave, of the Perpendicular period, form a pleasing and picturesque feature from almost all possible points of view. Impressive they most assuredly are, though perhaps promising to the stranger at first sight a more extensive and noble fabric than that of which they form so important a part. However, when one has

THE STOUR: WIMBORNE MINSTER IN THE DISTANCE



entered the building the sense of peaceful venerableness which comes upon one serves to banish any disappointment which has arisen by reason of the comparative lack of size.

Of the original Norman building little now remains save the lantern arches, the piers of the nave, the clerestory, and the walls of the transept and choir. The central tower of the Transition-Norman period, with a two-storied open lantern of exceptional beauty, was once surmounted by a spire, said to have been "as high as that of Salisburie" by an old chronicler. This, which was probably about one hundred to one hundred and thirty feet high, fell in 1600 during a great storm, when some portions struck the roof; and although the building had many inside it, its fall was "without anie hurte to the people."

In this ancient fane, mellow and picturesque without, and hallowed by centuries of worship within—

> A monument of ages dark,
> That speaks traditions high
> Of minstrels, tournaments, crusades,
> And mail-clad chivalry—

the histories of men who have lived and served and done and died are thick. And here lies royal dust—that of Ethelred, brother of Alfred the Great, with the monumental brass marking the spot of his interment let into the pavement near the altar. The king, afterwards canonised, was (it is agreed by the most competent authorities) killed in a battle with the Danes at Marten, Wilts, distant from Wimborne some fourteen

miles, whence he was carried after the fight, and interred. Another king is stated by the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle to have been buried here in A.D. 962, for in it we find "King Sigferth killed himself, and his body lies at Wimborne."

Of little less interest is the fine altar-tomb, on the south side of the choir, of John Beaufort, Duke of Somerset, grandson of John of Gaunt, who died in 1444, and of Margaret Beauchamp, his wife. This was erected by their daughter, the Lady Margaret Tudor, afterwards mother of Henry VII. In the south choir aisle is a huge and interesting oak chest, hewn out of a log some seven feet in length, formerly used as a receptacle for the church plate, deeds, etc. It was secured by six locks, and is believed to be eleven hundred years old, and to be the most ancient chest of its kind in England.

On the opposite side of the choir is the tomb of Gertrude, Marchioness of Exeter, who died in 1556. Another, in the south chancel aisle, to which there is attached the element of romance which always seems to appeal to sightseers, is that of Anthony Ettrick, first Recorder of Poole, who "committed" the unfortunate Duke of Monmouth after his capture on Shag Heath. His connection with this event rendered him so unpopular with the commonalty that he in disgust protested that he would be buried "neither in nor outside the church, and neither above nor below ground." In order to accomplish this apparently difficult feat, he caused an opening to be made in the

wall on a level with the pavement, and in the year 1691 (which he seems to have thought would be that of his death) he deposited a black slate or marble coffin in the cavity, on which the date was inscribed. There he was buried on his death eleven years later. He left a sufficient sum to keep the coffin and niche in repair.

The minster contains yet another curiosity, which is believed to be almost unique, in the quaint old orrery, made by one Peter Lightfoot, a Glastonbury monk, in 1320. For nearly six hundred years this ingenious piece of mechanism, which is connected with the clock in the west tower, has continued to show the age and phases of the moon, the revolution of the planets, and the position of the sun according to the Copernican system.

Wimborne, unprogressive though it was in many respects during the centuries which followed the abolition of its religious foundation, possesses at least one claim to fame possessed by few other Wessex towns. It was the home of a free library in the days when such institutions were practically unknown. This unique collection of chained books, some 240 in number, is housed in a room reached through the vestry, and was gathered together by one of the clergy of the church, William Stone, a native of the town. It was thrown open to the townsfolk, and, lest the books should be borrowed and not returned, each volume was chained. Amongst the collection are several works of note, including first editions of Sir

Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The oldest volumes are a Latin MS. on vellum, *Regimem Animarum*, dated 1343, which was intended for the use of the priest attached at that time to the flourishing monastery; and the works of Anselm, printed in 1485.

Over the first-named of these books the poet Prior, whose birthplace is generally spoken of as Wimborne, in the year 1664, dozed, and the candle which he had somehow or other smuggled in to read by falling upon Sir Walter Raleigh's book, many pages were burned. The destroyed text was supplied by hand, discs of paper, on which were written the missing words, having been ingeniously let into the damaged pages.

The Grammar School, of ancient foundation and picturesquely situated, is a modern and uninteresting building which nowadays lives in a purely scholastic memory, and not in an antiquarian one.

Of the ancient building founded by Margaret, Countess of Richmond, not a vestige remains; nor of that existing when Queen Elizabeth refounded the school and directed that it should henceforth be known as "The Grammar School of the foundation of Queen Elizabeth in Wimborne Minster."

In the past it furnished those two indigent and not too scrupulous monarchs, James I. and Charles I., with opportunities for extortion. The first, having his doubts concerning the validity of its charter, only consented to its continuance on payment of £600 by the school governors; and his successor, King Charles

of blessed memory, was seemingly afflicted with like misgivings, for he exacted a fine of £1000 on similar grounds.

But it is only fair to add that the old school which has undergone such vicissitudes, although having little of antiquarian or architectural interest nowadays, has not been behind in educational work in this corner of Wessex, and amongst its scholars has had not an inconsiderable number of boys destined afterwards to become famous, amongst whom may be mentioned the poet Prior, and John Lewis, the historian of Wyclif.

Wimborne and Poole are separated by four miles or so of pretty country lanes, followed by the wide stretch of heather and gorse-clad moorland which is almost Scotch in character, though less bleak and impressive than the famous Egdon Heath, to the south of Bere Regis.

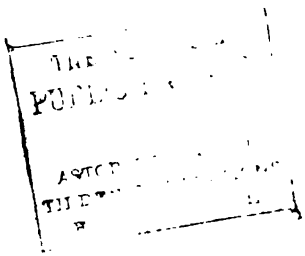
The traveller in Wessex approaching Poole along this upland road comes at the end of it, where it dips down the steep side of Constitution Hill, upon a suddenly opening prospect of almost unrivalled charm and loveliness, embracing as it does the beautiful harbour stretched out below, and the lofty Purbeck Hills, which seem to shut the harbour in to the south ; whilst eastwards is another stretch of pine-clad moorland, broken up by the tiny hills of Parkstone and vistas of the town of Poole, of the silvery waters of Holes Bay, and of Lytchett Heath. Seen from this eminence, Poole takes on itself the beauty possessed by

nearly all irregularly built places almost engirdled by water. Anything there is of squalor about the little seaport is softened by distance, and nothing save the picturesque remains—a beauty of irregular buildings wreathed in smoke and lit of a summer's evening with the orange glow of the west.

At all seasons of the year Poole and its harbour, seen from the heights of Upper Parkstone, present a picture of extraordinary beauty, almost Italian in character. The town itself, which is so picturesquely situated at the head of the harbour of the same name, is one of the most ancient ports in the south of England, and has more than once in olden times been on the way to becoming one of first-class importance. Why Poole has remained stationary for the last twenty years, and indeed may be said in a measure to have retrograded as a port during that period, it is not very easy to determine. The reason may possibly be found in the lack of capital for developing the harbour, and the fact that without development the latter is not one admitting vessels of any great tonnage.

Although the town does not appear in any chronicles of Anglo-Saxon or early Norman times, there seems little doubt that it existed quite early in the history of Wessex, either as a lakeside village or as a small settlement on the tongue of land jutting out into the harbour. But a notice of it does appear in William Longespée's charter; and in the reign of Henry III. an embargo was laid on all vessels in the port of

STUDLAND HEATH : POOLE HARBOUR IN THE DISTANCE



Poole, which seems to prove that it was at that time a place of very considerable maritime importance.

The early history of the town is somewhat obscure, but in the reign of Edward I. we find Poole furnishing three ships and fifty-nine sailors as a contribution towards the fleet which was gathered together under command of the Earls of Lancaster, Richmond, and Lincoln, to serve in the war being waged by the King against France. And in the reign of Edward III. it must have reached a state of even greater wealth and importance, for it was then able to supply four vessels and about a hundred men for the prosecution of the siege of Calais. Amongst other Wessex towns, it suffered terribly in the middle of the fourteenth century from the plague, and the records show that a very large proportion of the then existing population died from the disease. Most of the victims were buried on the projecting slip of land known nowadays as "The Baiter."

Not only did the high rate of mortality set back Poole from its position amongst the larger of Wessex towns, but it was also the cause of its disenfranchisement; and it was not until nearly a century later that it recovered somewhat of its former prosperity, and in the reign of Henry VI. was again permitted to send members to Parliament. The town a few years later was thrown into a state of excitement by the news that the Earl of Richmond, afterwards Henry VII., was at sea off the harbour mouth, with the idea of effecting a landing and raising the west

of England in support of his claim to the throne. But the Earl, finding that the district was forewarned of his coming, and that large bodies of men were in the immediate neighbourhood to resist his landing, sailed away, and Poole sank back into its usual state of lethargy.

About the end of the fifteenth century the town regained a good deal of its former prosperity, and was carrying on a thriving trade with Spain and other continental ports. Its merchants were many of them wealthy, and the Poole of to-day contains some few traces in the larger houses—many of which, however, are now put to uses quite foreign to their original owners' intentions—of the days when the port was really one of the most prosperous in the south of England. The place previous to this period and for some considerable time afterwards was in very bad repute, owing to the buccaneering proclivities of some of its inhabitants. It was in those days a hotbed of pirates and smugglers, and this fact was probably owing to the excellent shelter afforded by its numerous creeks to those preferring to obtain a living in any other way than that of legitimate trade or fishing. So bad was the reputation of the place that a rhyme still survives which was once in circulation concerning it :

> If Poole were a fish-pool, and men of Poole fish,
> There'd be a pool for the devil, and fish for his dish.

One of the most noted of Poole buccaneers—or, to give him his more suitable title, pirate—was a Harry

Paye who used to sail out of harbour with one or more well-manned and well-armed vessels and make raids upon the coasts of France and even of Spain. He was well known and feared by both the Spanish and French mercantile marine; and it is stated that on one occasion alone after one of his piratical enterprises he sailed into harbour with over a hundred vessels taken as prizes on the coast of Brittany. For some weeks after this performance Poole seems to have kept holiday, and to have given way to all sorts of debauch and viciousness. We are told that "many puncheons of good Porto wine and kegs of brandy were broached by the notorious pirate and partaken of by all and sundry on the quay of Poole and in the adjacent streets; so much so that there was scarcely a sober man in the town, and for days no one thought of business, or anything save eating and drinking and making merry."

So great was the reputation of this pirate, who was originally associated with Lord Berkeley in command of the fleet belonging to the Cinque Ports, that in a Spanish chronicle he is spoken of as "a knight who scoured the seas as a corsair with many ships, plundering all the Spanish and French vessels that he should meet with." His name must have presented some difficulties to the Spanish tongue, as we find it in this chronicle as "Arri Pay." The exploits of this most famous of Poole sailors were not, however, merely confined to the capture of ships, for he burnt Gijon and Finisterre, and amongst other exploits carried off

a famous crucifix from the Church of Santa Maria of Finisterre, which was esteemed as being one of the most valuable church ornaments, as well as the most holy of crucifixes, in those parts. Castile was also raided by him and his band of freebooters, and we read in the same chronicle: "He did much damage, taking many persons and exacting ransomes; and although other armed ships came there also from England, it was he who came oftenest."

But if the famous Harry Paye was successful in his expeditions, the town from which he sailed was not altogether to escape from the consequences, for we find that so vindictive a feeling prevailed against him that the desire for retaliation became very strong in the first years of the fifteenth century. And indeed in 1405 the French king sought the aid of Henrique III., king of Castile, in a joint expedition for an attack upon Poole.

The Spaniards got more than forty vessels together, and eventually they sailed to La Rochelle. Here they were joined by several French ships, and after a little delay reached the coast of Cornwall, and whilst sailing further east landed here and there for the purpose of plundering and capture. Ultimately Pero Nino, the commander of the fleet, finding himself near the famous "Arri Pay's" place of abode, determined to attack the town. Accordingly they entered the harbour, and sailing up it came early one morning in sight of Poole. Apparently the town walls were not then existent; but the French commander seems to

have thought that it would have been rash to attempt to take vengeance for the many depredations of the famous Poole buccaneer.

A Spanish force was put ashore, however, and a large number of houses were set on fire. One of the bigger buildings on the quay was held for some time against the attack of the Spaniards; but so fierce was the assault of the latter that the defenders were forced to retreat out at the back, and the besiegers found the place full of arms and sea stores of all kinds, which they carried off to their ships. The Poole inhabitants then rallied, and on being reinforced from the country round about returned to the attack, and a large number of people were killed and wounded. A brother of Harry Paye's was among the former.

The French having after all landed and come to the assistance of Pero Nino's men, the inhabitants of Poole were once more driven back and the town was set on fire. The enemy, having taken some prisoners, then retired to their vessels and set sail for Southampton. This attack upon the town forms one of the most stirring incidents in its history.

Then for more than two hundred years the life of the town seems to have been quite uneventful; but on the outbreak of the Civil War between Charles I. and the Parliament, Poole espoused the cause of the latter, and proved a very stout Roundhead stronghold. The Marquis of Hertford marched upon it in 1642, and summoned it to surrender; but the townsmen were so determined and spirited in their action that the

Royalist forces were compelled to retire. The next year the garrison, aided by that of Wareham, attacked and defeated Lord Inchiquin's Irish regiment, and a few days after succeeded in capturing and carrying off £3000, which were being sent by Prince Rupert to Weymouth, as well as seizing a hundred horses and a quantity of arms and ammunition.

Later in the same year the Poole garrison was in part drawn off for the purpose of commencing the siege of Corfe Castle; but on the appearance of Prince Maurice in the neighbourhood, and owing to the stubborn resistance offered them by the gallant Lady Bankes, they were forced to raise the siege and retire. The Prince seems to have rather wasted his opportunities, for he remained so long at Dorchester and Weymouth that when he summoned Poole to surrender his summons was not obeyed, and, appearing before the town to attack it, he found that it had been so far strengthened and fortified as to present so great difficulties to him that he could not hope to take it without a lengthy siege. Abandoning the attack, he proceeded to another part of the country.

Throughout the Civil War the inhabitants of Poole seem to have been very active in support of the Parliament, and on many occasions attacked various parties of Royalist troops who happened to be in the neighbourhood. In November 1643, in consequence of a threatened attack by Prince Maurice, the Earl of Warwick, the Lord High Admiral of the Parliament, was in the harbour with a fleet of ships sent thither

to afford protection to the town. He proceeded up the Wareham Channel and captured several small vessels belonging to the Royalists, besides plundering the town, which at that time happened to be in the hands of the King's partisans.

During the reign of Charles II. Poole suffered greatly from the plague. On Friday, September 15, 1665, Charles II. visited the town in company with the Duke of Monmouth and a large number of nobles and officers. He and his suite were hospitably entertained, and a record exists of the sentiments expressed by the Mayor of the town and the burgesses concerning the honour that had been done them, as well as of the banquet and junketing.

In the last years of the seventeenth century the inhabitants of Poole became once more famous for gallantry at sea. In 1694, Captain Peter Jolliffe, cruising in a small vessel called the *Sea Defender*, witnessed the taking of a fishing-boat belonging to Weymouth by a privateer off Studland. The captain of the *Sea Defender* boldly went to the rescue, and attacking the privateer, which was at least three times his strength and size, forced him to abandon the prize, and eventually drove him ashore near Lulworth. The privateer was taken possession of by the inhabitants, and the crew were made prisoners. Captain Jolliffe was honoured by the presentation of a handsome gold chain and medal from the King as a recognition of his gallant exploit.

In the following year a somewhat similar event took place, when a William Thomson, master of a fishing-

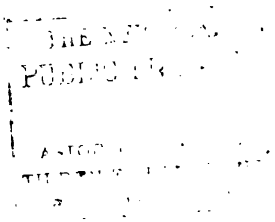
boat of Poole, whilst accompanied by only one seaman and a boy, captured a Cherbourg privateer sloop manned by twenty and brought her into Poole.

During the early part of the last century Poole was a hotbed of smugglers, the contraband trade being carried on on a very large scale along the whole of the south coast. Many attempts were made to put down smuggling, in consequence of a petition sent to the House of Commons by legitimate traders, stating that the home manufactures were greatly decayed by reason of the great quantities of goods run, and entreating the House to attempt to remedy this evil. Notwithstanding the many endeavours on the part of the navy and coastguards to suppress the illicit traffic, it was organised and carried on with such daring in many parts of the county of Dorset, as not only to defy the power of the law, but also to create a state of terrorism which affected the inhabitants of the district round about, and even in a measure the preventive men themselves.

The many creeks and inlets of the harbour lent themselves easily to smuggling operations, as did also the pine-wooded chines and quiet stretches of sandy beach extending from the entrance to the harbour at South Haven, past what was then the mere hamlet of Bourne, ensconced amid pine-woods and heather-clad valleys, to the distant eastern point of the bay, Hengistbury Head, near Christchurch.

Along this stretch of yellow sand not a few romantic as well as desperate encounters between the smugglers

WESTWOOD MANOR HOUSE



and the preventive service men have in past times taken place, and at least one novel[1] has been written recounting these exploits. On the steepest part of the cliffs—which at the beginning of the present century was steeper than at the present day—a spot is still pointed out where a bold and noted smuggler held a preventive man head downwards, threatening if he fired his pistol or gave any alarm he should be dropped on to the beach below.

But it was in Poole itself that one of the most daring and desperate exploits of the south-coast smugglers took place. In the year 1747, one John Diamond agreed to purchase from a well-known body of smugglers a large amount of tea in the Channel Islands for conveyance across to Poole. Unfortunately for the smugglers' enterprise, the lugger containing the tea was captured by a revenue cutter ere it could reach the harbour, and of course its cargo was confiscated. This act on the part of the custom-house authorities so incensed the persons who had found the money for such an undertaking that the gang of smugglers, who had been largely concerned in the affair, came from Hawkhurst in Sussex, to the number of sixty or seventy, armed to the teeth, and, making an attack upon the custom-house on the Poole Quay, broke it open and carried off some four thousand pounds weight of tobacco and many chests of tea before the very eyes of the preventive officers. This exploit and the tragic circumstances which followed it are fully described

[1] *Branksome Dene.*

in that old-fashioned but exciting romance, *The Smuggler*, by G. P. R. James.

Although this attack upon the Poole custom-house remains one of the most famous exploits of the smugglers on the south coast, it proved by no means the last of a series of bold attempts to avoid the payment of customs duties. And many almost equally interesting stories could be told of the boldness and resource shown by the fishermen and others in the carrying out of their illicit traffic.

Even in the early part of the last century several of the inland villages, as well as those of the coast, were largely peopled by smugglers, and it was commonly stated that all the inhabitants of Kinson village were about this period either actively or passively engaged in the occupation of running cargoes. The most famous of all the chiefs of smugglers upon the East Dorset and West Hampshire coasts was one named Gulliver.

His smuggling operations were carried out on such an extensive scale that he not only had a small fleet of vessels, but also teams of pack-horses and a number of men in his employment, who were stated at that time to be scarcely less than fifty in number. His favourite spots for landing cargoes were in the inlets of Poole Harbour and at the mouths of the chines—in particular, Branksome Chine, on the borders of Hants and Dorset. But this famous Gulliver, who lived to a good old age, leaving a large fortune, was not only a smuggler, but appears at times to have acted in the capacity of a

secret service agent for the Government. A writer of the period states that no movements of the French took place during the great war with France, but that Gulliver was cognisant of them, and his knowledge was found to be so valuable that the Government often overlooked his smuggling operations for the sake of the information that he was able to afford regarding the plans of the French. With the growth of Free Trade, and the increase of the population along the Dorset and Hampshire coasts, smuggling gradually declined, and the race of Poole smugglers at length became extinct.

The last of the many famous people who have landed at Poole, or embarked from that port, engaged on more or less romantic enterprises, was Charles X. He arrived there on August 23, 1830, after his flight from France.

Poole has few buildings of note nowadays, and even its chief church is an unpicturesque structure standing at the west end of the town, a little north of the quay and somewhat at the back of the High Street. It is of no antiquity, although it stands upon the site of a much more ancient building.

The Poole of to-day is still a busy seaport, and the High Street, which is of considerable length, generally wears an air of enterprise and bustle. The character of the trade of Poole as a seaport has, however, very much altered of late years. Formerly it was of a more general character, but nowadays it is almost entirely confined to the timber trade with the Baltic,

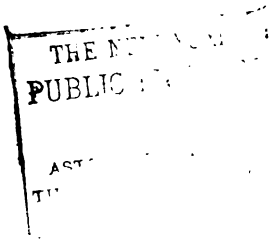
and a considerable trade in sea-borne coal. Its shipbuilding, once a source of considerable prosperity, has of late years greatly declined, although some small yachts and boats are still built. Its ancient and prosperous trade with Newfoundland has become entirely extinct.

The quays form one of the most interesting and busy portions of the town, and here may be found many types in whose faces may still be traced the characteristics of the old sea-dogs who fought, during the latter half of the eighteenth and early part of the nineteenth centuries, so gallantly and toughly against the French.

Amid the network of narrow alleys which run in and out amongst the larger and more solid red-brick houses which flank the quay—and some of them still speak of the ancient prosperity of their merchant owners—are many picturesque bits of architecture. And here also may be discovered by the enterprising artist or amateur photographer quaint doorways hidden away in courtyards, the stones of which have long since become moss- and grass-grown ; and pieces of bulging wall which are lichen-grown and weather-stained by many years of sunshine and storm.

Modern Poole has, strangely enough, not very largely displaced the Poole of ancient days. Old buildings have not as a general rule been pulled down to be replaced by new ones, but the more modern houses have been built on the outskirts of the older town, along the roads which lead to Parkstone and Bourne-

THE BROADSTONE GOLF LINKS, NEAR POOLE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mouth, and to the upper part of Longfleet. Poole is seen to the greatest advantage when viewed from the encircling highlands which gird it to the south-west, south-east, east, and north-east.

From Poole to Wareham is double the distance by road that it is "as the crow flies." The two towns have been intimately connected historically, but nowadays, whilst Wareham is decaying, Poole at least holds its own. Wareham can either be reached by way of Hamworthy (the shorter way) or by way of Upton, the prettily situated country seat associated with the famous Tichborne family. To Lytchett the road in parts is very pretty, and then comes a long stretch of rather bleak moorland, known as Lytchett Heath, followed by a belt of pine-forest which takes the traveller almost to the confines of Wareham itself.

The town, now a quiet and even sleepy place, situated on the ridge dividing the river Frome to the south and the Trent to the north, just at the point of their confluence, still preserves several features of interest for the traveller and antiquarian. Anciently, in the days when its name occurred with some frequency in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the town was of considerable importance; nowadays it is just one of those picturesquely irregular townlets, considerably behind the age both as regards its commercial and social life, of which Wessex can boast so many. Of its old-time glories, consisting of a castle and magnificent earthworks, which in Saxon times stood the brunt of many a Danish attack, there are few traces now remaining.

But above the river is still a mound which is pointed out as the Castle Close, and to the south-west and south of the town are considerable traces of the ancient earthworks.

In Saxon times Wareham must have been a town of first-class importance, for we know that it was continually attacked and occupied by the Danish pirates, who found Poole Harbour and Wareham Channel such convenient means of access inland from the coast. At first, on the occasion when Guthrun, the Danish chief, sailing up Poole Harbour, made an attack upon Wareham, only a few none too bold-spirited men could be gathered around the Saxon standard to resist the Danish invaders.

Several kings of Wessex were buried in Wareham, and it was also here, in the Church of St Mary, that the body of hapless Edward the Martyr, treacherously slain at Corfe Castle, is said to have been interred. During the several periods of the Danish invasions Wareham was the constant objective of their attack, and in A.D. 878 it was invested by a Danish army, and the whole town was destroyed.

King Alfred the Great, with the army he succeeded in gathering around his standard, however, came to the rescue of the inhabitants, and under his protection the town was speedily rebuilt, and his daughter refounded the ruined nunnery which the Danish hordes had plundered. King Athelstan had instituted a mint here many years before, and it seems not improbable that this fact provided an extra inducement to the Danes

THE SAXON CHURCH AT WAREHAM

The "Anglebury" of the Wessex Novels

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for their attacks, as it is recorded that on several of their visits "they obtained much plunder and money." Canute returned here with his victorious army after having ravaged the whole of Wessex and plundered the rich Abbey of Cerne.

At the time of the Conquest the town had so far regained its prosperity and importance that it was one of the manors retained by the Conqueror himself; and at this period a castle was erected, in which, in the reign of Henry I., one Robert de Belesme, Earl of Montgomery, known as the richest, greatest, and wickedest man of his age, was imprisoned for rebelling against the King. He is stated to have starved himself to death.

The strategical importance and strength of the town were, early in the period of the struggle between Stephen and the Empress Maud, the cause of its being involved in the war which ensued. The castle was seized in the year 1138 by Robert of Lincoln in the name of the Empress, and four years later both it and the town were taken by Stephen, and the latter partially burnt, during the absence of the Duke of Gloucester, who on his return besieged the castle, which capitulated after holding out for three weeks.

Then for a time the unfortunate town seems to have enjoyed comparative peace. King John visited it in 1205, and also a few years later; and in 1213 it was the scene of one of those mediæval tragedies which from time to time cast so lurid a light upon the ignorance and credulity of the common folk and even

of the governing classes of those times. In that year Peter of Pomfret, a hermit who had in the year before prophesied that King John would be deposed before the following Ascension Day, was taken from his prison at Corfe Castle, where he had been confined with his son for making this prophecy, and "was dragged with horses backwards and forwards about the streets of this town (Wareham), and between it and Corfe Castle, and afterwards hanged, drawn, and quartered."

During succeeding years Wareham attained to a large degree of prosperity, and it was here that Edward I., at the end of the thirteenth century, came to superintend the manning and provisioning of the ships which had been gathered together for the invasion of France. From that time, however, Wareham seems to have enjoyed immunity from warlike events for several hundred years. Then, at the commencement of the struggle between the King and Parliament, it soon became an object of contention between the Royalists and Roundheads. In quite the early part of the struggle the town was fortified and garrisoned for the Parliament, and we read in a chronicle of the time that a sum of more than £60 was advanced by the County Treasurer for that purpose. Soon after, however, it was seized by the Crown; and then again in November 1643 a Parliamentarian captain by the name of Lay brought up the Channel from Poole upwards of two hundred men, and although at first they were opposed by some of the Royalists, these latter

eventually, on the enemy attacking the town, fled out of one gate as the besiegers entered by the other. A further account states that two hundred of the Royalists were made prisoners, and that a great quantity of ammunition and arms, as well as cattle and provisions which had been brought together for the next day's market, was seized and carried away to Poole.

Although the town see-sawed between the Royalists and Parliamentarians, there is little doubt that the real sympathy of the townsfolk was chiefly with the Crown, and it was on account of this well-known attachment to the Royal cause that Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper furnished to the governor of Poole a certain memorandum arguing in favour of the total destruction of the town, because, as he urged, "it is extremely mean-built and the inhabitants almost all dreadful malignants"; failing its destruction, Sir Anthony proceeds to say: "If they (the Parliamentarian authorities) are unwilling to destroy the town, it may be left for a horse quarter, and (if) they have directions, when they are forced to quit it to set it on fire."

Its destruction was, however, from some cause or other averted, and it jogged on its uneventful way from that period till the time of the Monmouth rebellion. It would appear that the town was the chief place of execution in the immediate district; for, after the unfortunate Duke's defeat at Sedgemoor, and the "Bloody Assize" of Judge Jeffreys which followed it, three unfortunate rebels who had been with Monmouth's forces were condemned to death and sent

to Wareham for execution. The spot on the western side of the ancient ramparts where the sentence was carried out is still known. as "Bloody Bank." The three unfortunate men were here hanged and afterwards drawn and quartered, their heads being nailed to a wooden tower where stands the present town hall, and their quarters fastened on the bridge.

A pathetic incident in connection with this barbarous deed was the taking down of the heads by sympathetic friends, who hid them under a bed in one of the houses in the High Street, and afterwards gave them decent interment. Although a hue and cry was raised by the authorities, and many of the houses were searched, the ghastly relics, which had been hurriedly hidden, fortunately escaped detection.

From that time the history of Wareham is, indeed, prosaic and uneventful.

An ancient plan of the town shows that in the days of its prosperity it possessed eight churches, three only of which now remain, and only one—that of St Mary—is now used for worship. The old church of St Martin, of which little more than the tower and a small fragment remains, stands perched upon a sort of terrace almost at the northern entrance to the town. St Mary's Church, which was rebuilt some sixty years ago, contains several things of interest, amongst which is the double south-eastern chapel, containing quaint effigies and inscribed stones which are of great antiquity, now built into the new walls, and a very curious hexagonal lead font, dating probably from the twelfth

century, and adorned with figures of the Apostles. The south-eastern chapel is also interesting from the fact that it is erected on the spot where stood the little one in which the remains of Edward the Martyr were deposited after his murder at Corfe Castle.

Of the famous rectors of this church two may be mentioned. One, William Wake, a grandson of whom afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury, was stated to have been "an honest, merry, kind-hearted person; a good scholar and a good soldier and an excellent drum-beating parson," who because of his predilection for King Charles I. was imprisoned no less than nineteen times. The other rector of note connected with the church was the Rev. John Hutchins, author and projector of the monumental history of the county of Dorset which bears his name.

Wareham of to-day is a half-decayed and tranquil town. On passing through it the traveller in Wessex can scarcely realise the fact that at one time it occupied a position of importance; whilst nothing now remains to show that so late as the fifteenth century Wareham was actually a seaport. No ships of any size now come up the Channel, and the recession of the sea has robbed it of its busy quays and ancient seaport characteristics. Possessed of really only one street, the town rests in placid tranquillity, seemingly undisturbed by the events and turmoil of the outside world. Not until evening does Wareham apparently wake up, and then the streets take on a semblance of activity, and the dead townlet, as it were, disgorges

some of its inhabitants on to the roads and pavements. In winter it is even less alive, and, seen through the mist rising from the sodden surrounding meadows, it looks like a mere phantasm of a town now scarcely longer existent.

Of the romance which once enshrouded it, of the brave days of old when ships and men left the quays bent on voyages to distant parts and perilous adventurings on the coast and against ships of their hereditary French foes, and even of those days of the Napoleonic wars, not a vestige seems to cling to this antique town set amid environing meadows, grass-grown walls, and patches of gardens.

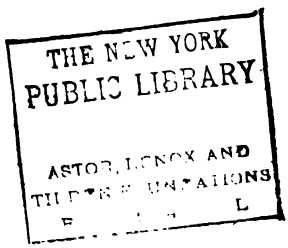
some uncomfortable quarters of an hour until the Earl of Arundel arrived from the metropolis with an escort to convey him and his Queen to London, for Spain and England were at that time by no means in friendly relationship, and it was against the advice of their captains and generals that the sea-sick King and Queen had landed on English soil.

In the reign of Henry VIII., a French invasion being anticipated, the King called upon the bailiff to send "a number of foot men well armed for war, some of them to be archers and some of them to be billmen armed with a bill, and in addition each man was to have a good sword and dagger."

It was about this time Sandsfoot Castle was built by the King, on the southern shore of the spit of land forming the Nothe, and Leyland mentions it as being "a right goodlie Castel havyng one open barbicane." The fragments which remain go far to prove that it was a place, if not of great size, of considerable strength.

For many centuries—in fact, until the reign of Elizabeth—what is now known as Weymouth consisted of two distinct towns, one having the name of Melcombe Regis, and the other being known by the present name of the town. These two places had two distinct charters of incorporation ; but, as there was only one harbour to be divided between them, it is not to be wondered at that many hot disputes arose in mediæval and even later times between the inhabitants of the two boroughs. Indeed, so great a rivalry and hatred seem to have existed between their respective townsfolk that

COTTAGES AT STOKE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the records contain several accounts of bloodshed which occurred in disputes arising upon such subjects as the customs dues and the use of the harbour. However, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth the two ports were incorporated into one, and the causes of these frequent disputes were thus happily removed.

A few years after the granting of this charter "of the united borough and town of Weymouth and Melcombe Regis," some of the French privateers, who were indeed little better than pirates, infesting the Channel and the home seas at that time made a descent upon the roadstead of Weymouth, and, after damaging a large number of the ships which lay at anchor there, succeeded in "cutting out" and carrying off a vessel named *The Angel of La Rochelle*, of some sixty tons' burden. An attempt to enter the harbour proper and seize another ship was, however, frustrated by the bravery of the townsfolk, who, training some pieces of ordnance upon them, repulsed the pirates, killing seven and wounding a large number. This action so enraged Purson, their leader, that he vowed he would return later on and burn the town. This threat of the buccaneer's was, so far as his return was concerned, carried out the following year; but forewarned was forearmed, and the pirates found that the townsfolk had wisely used the time to strongly fortify the place, and it appears that on this occasion the buccaneers were neither able to carry out their threat nor to secure any booty.

With the coming of the Armada Weymouth once

more played an important part in national history, by furnishing, in the year 1588, no less than six ships to Drake's fleet; some of them were large vessels for that time, ranging in tonnage from *The Golden Lion*, a vessel of 120 tons, down to the *Catherine*, of just half the size. This contribution to the national defence proves that Weymouth must have considerably recovered its fallen fortunes, for a return of all the ships of the mercantile marine made fourteen years previously showed that the total number of English ships was then only 1232, and of these only 200 were upwards of eighty tons' burden. The Weymouth flotilla bore a gallant part in the running fight which lasted from opposite Plymouth Sound to the Bill of Portland. And so successful, indeed, was the action of the squadron that one of the Armada vessels was taken by them and brought into the roadstead. One can imagine with what joy the arrival of the huge and cumbersome captive galleon was welcomed, and how, as a contemporary writer states, the townsfolk thronged the shore and gazed out across the rippling waves to where the prize and her captors had brought up at anchor. Not only were they justly proud of the gallantry of their fellow-townsmen in assisting to capture the Spanish vessel, but with the return of the fleet came a sense of security from attack which had been absent from their minds for many months.

Weymouth, although at this date an important town, was as yet, according to John Coker, one of a single street. His general description is interesting, as,

although the town has grown in modern times and extended itself considerably to the north-west, it still bears, possessing as it does only one or two important streets, excluding the sea-front, a strong resemblance to its ancient plan. Coker writes: The town "for a good space lieth open to the sea, and on the back of it riseth a hill of such steepness that they are forced to climbe upp to their chappell by 80 steps of stone, from whence you get a fair prospect of the town and haven lying under it." It was on the tower of this Wyke Church that the beacon was placed which gave the inhabitants warning of the Armada's approach.

During the Civil War Weymouth and Melcombe Regis were undoubtedly more for the King than the Parliament; but both the Roundhead and Royalist forces contended for their possession very hotly, and till quite recent years houses and buildings still remained standing which bore traces of shots embedded in the woodwork and plastering, and bullet-holes.

The town changed hands several times during the Civil War, and in July 1643 was occupied by the Earl of Caernarvon and the Royalist forces, without any resistance on the part of the Parliamentary party. Prince Maurice, on afterwards joining the Earl, much to his discredit, set aside the terms of surrender, by which immunity had been promised to the townsfolk from the seizure of their persons or property. Indeed, so much licence did the Royalist soldiers take that the Earl quitted his command in disgust, and joined the King, who was then besieging Gloucester.

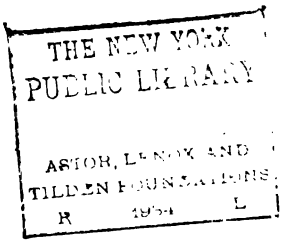
In the following year Weymouth fell into the hands of the Parliamentarian forces, and suffered very considerably by the severe punishments meted out to some of the inhabitants, who had assisted the Royalist cause, by Colonel Sydenham. Several persons, amongst others Captain John Wade and John Miles Constable, were hanged at Weymouth, and much of the shipping on the Weymouth side of the harbour, and part of the town, were burned down by the Roundhead colonel, who afterwards defended the place successfully against a siege by the Royalists which lasted eighteen days.

The town some years later gained Parliamentary distinction from the fact that Dennis Bond, who had been summoned to attend Parliament as member for the borough by no less a person than the Lord Protector himself, moved during the session of 1654 "That the Crown and title of King should be offered to the Protector."

After the battle of Worcester, on September 3, 1651, and Charles II.'s escape, Weymouth became the objective from which he hoped to sail for safety to France. The King, whilst a fugitive and lodged at Trent House, near Sherborne (where the King's "hole" or hiding-place is still shown), put himself into communication with Sir John Strangeways, who lived near Weymouth, asking that he should endeavour to procure a vessel in which he could flee the country. This, however, proved to be such a difficult, if not an impossible task, that Weymouth as a port of escape was abandoned.

PORTLAND FROM THE NORTHERN SHORE OF WEYMOUTH BAY

The "Isle of Slingers" of the Novels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Weymouth in Georgian Times

At the Restoration the town seems to have somewhat recovered from the heavy losses which had been sustained by it and the townsfolk during the Civil War. A contemporary writer states that the Justices of the Peace placed these losses at the then huge sum of twenty thousand pounds sterling, and this by no means seems to have included the partial destruction of property which was caused by the fighting in the streets, and the damage done to many of the houses, more particularly in the neighbourhood of the upper harbour and quay.

Only a mere echo appears to have reached the town of the stirring and tragic doings in the west of England during the brief period of the Monmouth rebellion; although it is more than probable that some of the Weymouth men rallied, as did so many of the west country, to the standard of the ill-fated Duke at Bridport or Taunton.

The next event of any importance in the history of the town was the visit of George III., who, resorting thither in 1789, afterwards made it his constant summer place of residence. At this time Weymouth was, according to a contemporary writer, little more than a straggling assemblage of fishermen's huts, with a few superior houses along the sea-front, and at the back of them an expanse of low, marshy ground which no enterprise at that date seemed capable of draining and reclaiming. The present-day busy and prosperous St Mary's Street was then a mere row of thatched cottages with a few houses of superior size sandwiched

in between ; whilst St Thomas Street was an ill-paved road leading to some small houses with picturesque gardens and paling fences in front of them.

With the first coming of King George III., who took up his residence at Gloucester Lodge, the rise of modern Weymouth may be said to have commenced. Not only did a large number of the nobility and Court officials come in the train of the King and his family, but also that ever-ready herd of would-be fashionable folk anxious to follow the Court, and by doing so bask in some of the glamour which surrounded its presence. New buildings became necessary, and, as the old town then afforded few good positions, many of the new residences were erected in the Melcombe Regis quarter, skirting the magnificent bay and facing the sea.

In those days Weymouth must have reminded one of St James's Park, for in and out of the new houses came those perfumed Georgian dandies with their traditional Malacca and tasselled canes and jewelled snuff-boxes in hand, whilst along the Esplanade went chairmen bearing stately Court ladies, rouged, patched, and crinolined, attended many of them by courtiers in the gay attire of the period. The sea-front must have presented on fine days a singularly gay and brilliant sight ; and the country folk for miles round were accustomed to go into Weymouth to gaze and stare at the quality with wonder-enlarged eyes, much as they would have gone to see any other sight or performance. The King not only visited a bath in St Thomas Street,

where, we are told, salt water was pumped from the sea on purpose, but he and many of his Court took to sea-bathing, and the royal machine was, we gather from contemporary prints, "a right Royal cumbersome and elaborate affair." "Many folk daily come into the town," states a writer of the period, "to see His Majesty and the Court bathing in the sea-water half a furlong out from the shore. And some days the crowd be so great on the sands that people are pushed into the water against their will."

In the evenings the ladies and gentlemen of the Court frequently crossed the harbour for the purpose of the dramatic entertainments or dances which were organised for their amusement in the Old Rooms, which in the latter half of the eighteenth century were prosperous, but are now almost deserted and fallen from their high estate. A curious insight into the life and conduct of the frequenters of this old assembly place is to be gathered from the regulations which were drawn up by one T. Rodber, who appears to have been the master of the ceremonies at this period.

Amongst the things which ladies and gentlemen frequenting the rooms were not allowed to do, were that the former should not appear on Tuesday or Friday evenings in riding habits ; to dance in coloured gloves, nor to quit their places in a country dance before it was finished, unless they meant to dance no more that night. The latter on Tuesday and Friday evenings were not allowed to appear in boots, which

probably meant riding-boots, and the same restrictions applied to them regarding country dances and coloured gloves. And, lest any "ruffling" should by mischance take place or any dispute arise, they were directed to leave their swords at the door. No dogs were admitted under any conditions, and no tea-table was allowed to be carried into the card-room.

Notwithstanding these restrictions, there seems little doubt, from a contemporary diary, that very frequently dramatic and even tragic scenes were enacted over the card-tables. And there is no doubt that the chief use of the tea-room was for gossip by the fine ladies and the talk of scandal which was a great delight and so frequent a practice over a cup of tea in those days.

Some amusing and interesting descriptions of the Court and the behaviour of the townsfolk at this time are to be found in a diary of the period. In it we are told "that they dress out every street with labels, 'God save the King!'; the bathing machines make it their motto over all their windows, and even bathers that belong to the royal dippers wear it in their bandeaux on their bonnets to go into the sea, and have it again in large letters round their waists to encounter the waves."

The same diary humorously describes the surprise of George III. when, having dipped his royal person under the water, a band of music which lay hidden in a neighbouring bathing machine struck up "God save the King!"

A Mayor of Weymouth of this time was destined to

WATERSTONE HOUSE, DORSET

The house of Bathsheba Everdene in *Far from the Madding Crowd*

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distinguish himself by a comic interlude on an important occasion, as many another in his position has similarly done. The event in question was the presentation of an address of welcome to the King. The Mayor advanced to present it, and to the open-eyed astonishment of all, instead of kneeling as he had been told to do, he took the Queen's hand as he might that of any other lady.

"You should have kneeled, sir," said the master of the ceremonies, Colonel Gwynn.

"Sir, I cannot," answered the poor Mayor.

"Everybody does so, sir," persisted the Colonel.

The Mayor blushed, and exclaimed with some distress, amidst the laughter of those in the immediate neighbourhood: "Damme, sir, I have a wooden leg!"

Many stories were current in those days of humorous incidents which occurred with regard to the King and the Court. One of these, which has been preserved, is very similar in character to those which have been told of other monarchs.

On one of King George's rides into the country he passed a field during harvest in which only a single woman was at work, and, with the inquiring mind which distinguished His Majesty, he asked where the rest of her compánions had gone. The woman replied, not knowing who her questioner was: "They have gone to town to see the King."

"And why did you not go too?" inquired His Majesty.

"Oh!" exclaimed the woman, "I wouldn't give as

much as a pin to see 'un "—adding somewhat bitterly : "Besides, the fools that are down to town to see 'un will lose a day's work by it, which is more than I can afford to do, for I have five children to work for."

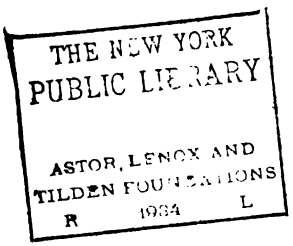
The King, as kings always do on such occasions, put his hand into his pocket and gave her some money, saying meantime : "Well, then, you can tell your companions who are gone to see the King that the King came to see you."

Weymouth was a teeming centre of news and excitement during that long war which only ended with the defeat of Napoleon at Waterloo. The King was out riding when the news of the battle of the Nile was brought by courier to him ; and on that night Weymouth was a scene of the greatest enthusiasm and rejoicing. The King, we are told, after he returned from his ride and had read the dispatches, sallied forth upon the Parade and good-humouredly accosted everyone he knew, and conveyed to them personally details of the splendid victory.

Weymouth suffered not a little from the "Boney" invasion scare, which for several years disturbed the peace of the inhabitants of most south-coast towns ; and so great was the satisfaction on the proclamation of peace that we are told that an open-air dance was held in the town, at which the four members of Parliament for the borough and their families took part. The crowd was so great that the event became almost of the nature of a carnival ; and it is recorded that the

A TITHE-BARN, ABBOTSBURY, NEAR WEYMOUTH

The scene of the sheep-shearing in *Far from the Madding Crowd*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couples taking part in the dance extended the whole length of the main thoroughfare.

Since those days Weymouth has indeed sobered down, till at the present time it is just a pleasant seaside holiday resort, quieter than most of a like size, and relying principally upon its many natural attractions for the pleasure and interest of its visitors.

Of public buildings, ecclesiastical or municipal, Weymouth possesses few of any note. Even the Guild Hall near the bridge dates no further back than 1837, and none of the churches are much older.

But this modern watering-place, which in the early fifties and sixties of the last century had rather declined from the position of importance and popularity which the patronage of King George had conferred upon it, has nowadays become a popular and charming seaside holiday resort. Its season, however, is a short one; and it still preserves in its atmosphere and comparative quietude of life many of those old-world characteristics which seem to hang about so many Wessex towns, whether inland or of the coast.

Weymouth, though possessed of a good harbour and an excellent roadstead, has declined sadly as a trading port, and were it not for the excursion traffic in the summer, and the trade and passenger traffic between it and the Channel Islands, there would indeed be little left of life and animation in its harbour and along its quays. No one even on the latter seems to the casual observer to be hurried or busy, and the same element of leisure

and somewhat old-fashioned commercial methods permeates the shops of even its main streets. But what the town lacks nowadays in the modern go-ahead attractions is in a measure compensated for by its beautiful situation and the many picturesque and interesting spots which lie in its immediate neighbourhood.

Weymouth, with its almost unrivalled bay, its gleaming yellow sandy beach, its white and coloured cliffs across the blue stretch of water to the north-east, and its breezy and picturesque uplands rising above these cliffs, still, as in the days when dandies walked its streets and chairmen struggled with their burdens of Court and other beauties in its narrow by-lanes, presents for the quieter type of holiday-maker an attractive element of old-world flavour and quietude.

A very different place is Bridport, which lies some eighteen miles to the west of Weymouth, and is reached by a good though somewhat hilly road, which, after a somewhat sinuous course from Upway to Portisham and Abbotsbury, runs for some distance beside a ridge of hills only a mile or so from the coast, ere it again plunges inland to reach Bridport—an excellent road, providing the wayfarer with quite a different kind of scenery from that of central Wessex, or even the coast-line from Durleston Head to Redcliffe Point, near Weymouth.

Bridport is a quaint and picturesque little town, lying chiefly in a hollow of the hills and on their well-wooded slopes, some mile and three-quarters inland from the sea, and from the mouth of the tiny

BRIDPORT

The "Port Bredy" of the Wessex Novels

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river which gives it its name. Nowadays, except when market folk are thronging its streets, it has a somewhat "sleepy hollow" atmosphere, apparently undisturbed by the happenings of the great outside world, although connected with it directly by a railway line, a branch of the Great Western.

In its streets, the architecture of which is, according to one authority, "pleasingly irregular," one meets many true Wessex types—farmers who might have stepped right out of the Wessex novels; sun-tanned dairymaids, whose joy in the glories of the "girt" (big) shops is only to be equalled by their love of gay colours and cheap finery on Sundays and at fair-time; drovers, who still happily many of them wear smocks and give an air of added picturesqueness to a picturesque calling; shepherds, of the likeness of Gabriel Oak in *Far from the Madding Crowd*; and the Darbies and Joans of surrounding villages, hale old Wessex folk who have seen many years but few changes, redolent, in their crinkled, russet cheeks, and country gait when afoot, of their yeomen ancestry.

The town itself is surrounded by a dairy district, and not a little of the famous "blue vinny" cheese finds its way into the market. Bridport has in a way been upon the point of attaining some degree of importance ever since its inception, and it might have become one of the ports of the southern coast. But it has sadly lagged behind, and is at the present day merely a fairly well-to-do country town, not overdone with life or activity of any kind.

Like many Wessex towns, the progress of Bridport has been of a retrograde character—if the "bull" may be permitted; for in the reign of Edward the Confessor it possessed some standing as a trading town, and had the distinction of a mint and priory. In the reign of Henry III. the town and surrounding lands were a royal demesne, the inhabitants holding the former on a lease from the King at an inconsiderable quit-rent. But although at this time it received a charter, it was not actually incorporated till some three centuries later. From ancient times it has been noted for its manufactures of hemp ropes, cords, etc., and so highly were Bridport rope and cord and sailcloth esteemed that the greater portion of all the canvas and cordage used for the rigging and sails of the English fleet that so gloriously scattered and defeated the Spanish Armada was made in the town. In connection with this industry there is an ancient joke at the historian Leland's expense. In olden times not only was hemp largely manufactured into rope and canvas in the town, but the raw material itself was grown in some quantity in the immediate neighbourhood, which gave rise to the local saying, when a man was hanged, that he was "stabbed with a Bridport dagger." This saying coming to the ears of Leland, and being received by him in the literal sense of the word, he solemnly states that "at Bridport be made good daggers." Which nodding of Jupiter has probably afforded as much cause for merriment as any mistake of the kind ever made by an historian.

Bridport has never played any important rôle in the

history of the west country, but it suffered, as did most other towns in Wessex, from at least two visitations of the plague, in 1625 and again in 1670, when "the sickness did not spare eny man, but caused many deathes in the town and in the villages near by, so that of the dead many remained unburied."

The town was occupied by both the Royalist and Parliamentarian forces during the Civil War, forming one of the pawns in the mighty game for the possession of the west of England. And here the fugitive Charles II. came after the battle of Worcester, and his abortive attempt to escape from Charmouth to the coast of France. And here also the Duke of Monmouth arrived on the fine Sunday morning of June 14, 1685, after a night march from Lyme, to attack the Dorset militia, which "lay in the town to the number of about 1200 with 100 or more horse."

Advancing under cover of the morning mist, the Duke's forces, to the number of about 450 all told, met with no outposts nor resistance, and, entering the town by way of the Allington Bridge, they surprised a considerable number of the King's troops, who after receiving one volley fled to join the main body, that lay in a field on the opposite side of the town. Then followed skirmishing in the main and cross streets near the Bull Inn, and in the end the Duke's followers, under the command of Colonel Wade and Lord Grey, advanced to attack the eastern bridge at the far end of the street by which they had entered. Here, after receiving the fire of the Dorset militia, who had been

rallied by their officers, they were commanded to retreat by Colonel Venner, who galloped away back to Lyme after Lord Grey, who had already fled, leaving Colonel Wade to extricate his small force as best he could. This he was successful in doing, and retreated towards Lyme with a number of prisoners who had been captured when he had entered the town. He was for some reason not pursued, but was met on the road back to Lyme by the Duke of Monmouth himself and a reinforcement of troops. The "affair" at Bridport has always been considered to have been most unfortunate for the Duke's cause, and reflected no credit upon anyone save Colonel Wade.

The inhabitants were some of them soon to pay dearly for this visit of Monmouth's, for a few months later Judge Jeffreys arrived, "and soon were hanging a round dozen of the townsfolk in the market-place."

From that time Bridport has had an uneventful history. Even the great wars with France seem to have disturbed it less than most sea-coast towns, and nowadays it is chiefly noted for its old-world atmosphere and stolid indifference to the more modern methods of progressive business life.

The church is a fine building, with a tower dominating the centre, largely Perpendicular in style, the transepts being Early English, with inserted Perpendicular windows. Within the building is one record of romantic interest, the brass erected to the memory of "Edward Coker, Gent, second son of Capt. Robert Coker of Mapowder, Slayn at the Bull Inn,

THE BRIDPORT ARMS

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in Bridpurt, June 14th, An. Do. 1685, by one Venner, who was an Officer under the late Duke of Monmouth in that Rebellion." There is also in the north transept an unusually fine "cross-legged" effigy of (it is supposed) a member of the Chideock family in mailed armour.

To the antiquarian this little "green-set" Wessex town presents a few attractions in the form of old houses and buildings, which are chiefly situated in South Street; whilst in the rear of a house on the side of the eastern bridge, where the final skirmish took place on that June Sunday morning of long ago, are the remains of the once rich St John's Hospital.

But we have concerned ourselves only with Bridport town: the truer Bridport, the quaint little "Port Bredy" of the Wessex novels of Thomas Hardy, is gradually becoming an unsophisticated seaside resort, known and valued by the few on account of its picturesqueness rather than visited by the many because of its social attractions. Its beach, skirting which are a few villas and still some of the old-time thatched cottages, is of finest shingle—so fine, indeed, that at first sight and from a little distance it is generally mistaken for sand—and the narrow entrance to the harbour and quays is flanked on either hand by cliffs which attain a considerable altitude. As a haven this little port is useless, the seas in storm time running too high in the wide expanse of the West Bay to make threading the needle-eye entrance to it a possibility without grave risk of disaster. It is just, as Mr Hardy puts, it "a gap in the rampart of hills which shut out the sea."

On its quay, at which an occasional ketch discharges her cargo, stands the famous George Inn, where King Charles II. lay when he came there a fugitive, and was nearly discovered by a more than normally suspicious ostler and a more than usually logical blacksmith, who reasoned that, as the fugitive's horse had been shoed in four counties, and one of them Worcestershire, the owner might be the person on whose head so high a price had been set.

To-day Bridport-by-Sea is just a quiet, picturesque spot in which to find rest and peace from the over-energetic and noisy world without, with the open and uninterrupted expanse of the wide West Bay to the south, sunlit and storm-lashed by turns. Northward lie the green, undulating hills and vales of Wessex.

Some eight or nine miles to the west of Bridport lies the ancient and picturesque little town of Lyme Regis, which has probably played as great a part in the history of Wessex and the south of England as any town of its size. The road from Bridport is picturesque but hilly, and, starting some three miles inland, passes through Chideock and then skirts the high upland known as Stone Barrow Hill, and, running at the back of this, gradually approaches the coast again, until it winds into Lyme itself, which nestles in old-fashioned retirement upon the borders of the sister county of Devon.

Lyme Regis is a quaint little townlet consisting of a few steep and narrow streets on the rocky and somewhat wild portion of the coast which lies midway

between Bridport to the east and Colyton in Devon to the west. Nowadays the little port, with its famous Cobb, has somewhat developed as a quiet holiday resort; but, like so many of the Dorset seaports, it is of considerably less account than it was many years ago. The principal portion of the town has been built in the hollow and on the slopes of a deep coombe, and in consequence it is a place of some picturesqueness. The principal street, indeed, may be almost said to be falling into the water. Through the centre of the coombe or valley flows the little stream called the Lym or Buddell, into the sea.

Many years ago Leland described Lyme as "a pretty market town set in the rootes of an high rokky hille down to the hard shore," and the description is equally accurate at the present day.

Small town though Lyme Regis has always been, a mention of it appears as early as the latter end of the eighth century, when by a charter of Kynewulf, king of Wessex, one manse was granted to the Abbey of Sherborne for the purpose of supplying the monks with salt. And as early as the reign of Edward I. it was enfranchised, and enjoyed the liberties appertaining to a haven and a borough. By the reign of Edward III. it had so far grown in importance that it was able to supply him with four ships and sixty-two seamen for the purposes of the siege of Calais.

The town was several times almost ruined by the attacks of the French during the reigns of Henry IV. and Henry VI. But in 1544 the piratical French

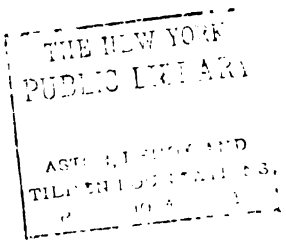
invaders were defeated with heavy loss. Lyme appears to have soon recovered its prosperity, and a few years later we find it furnishing a couple of ships, the *Jacob* and *Revenge*, with a good complement of men, to join the fleet gathered together for the purpose of defeating the Spanish Armada.

Its history, like that of so many others of the smaller towns of Wessex, has been a very chequered one. It became deeply involved in the Civil War between Charles and the Parliament, and was successfully held by the partisans of the latter against the King.

The siege of Lyme, which began on April 20, 1644, and lasted till June 15, was one of the most important in the west country throughout the progress of the war. The defence of the town was carried out with the greatest heroism by the inhabitants under the command of Colonel Seeley and Lieutenant-Colonel Blake, afterwards the famous admiral. The failure of the Royalist siege operations, which were under the direction of Prince Maurice himself, did much to injure the military reputation of this general. The besiegers concentrated their forces at Colway and Hay, having early captured these two houses, with the thirty men who were stationed as defenders in each.

Altogether Prince Maurice had some three thousand men under his command, and batteries were speedily raised and several fierce assaults made upon the town, which soon began to suffer the hardships incidental to such a close investment. By the middle of May

THE "RAINBARROW" OF *THE RETURN OF THE NATIVE*: THE "QUIET WOMAN" IN MIDDLE DISTANCE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provisions had run so short that there was some likelihood that the garrison would be forced to surrender, and at the beginning of the following month Colonel Seeley sent a letter to the "Committee of the two Kingdoms," urging that relief might be sent by land with provisions, or the town would undoubtedly be lost. Several sorties were made with a view of dislodging the besiegers from the new positions they had occupied, but the condition of the town was not improved, and both provisions and ammunition were running short.

On the 15th of June news came of the approach of the Earl of Essex, who was reported to have reached Dorchester with a force numbering some thirteen thousand horse and foot, and Prince Maurice, becoming aware of this, raised the siege and marched away towards Bristol. Unfortunately, on the same day one of those terrible acts of fanaticism which often disfigure glorious pages of history and incidents of human courage and endurance was perpetrated in the fields near Lyme, when some of the soldiers of the garrison, going to Colway and Hay House, now abandoned by the Royalists, found a poor old Irish woman who had been attached to the camp of the besiegers still there. They drove her through the streets to the water-side, where, after ill-treating and robbing her, they knocked her on the head, slashed and hewed her to pieces with their swords, and cast her mutilated body into the sea. Another account, that of Whitlock, states she was slain and almost pulled to pieces by the women of the town.

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With the raising of the siege, Lyme once more slipped back into its uneventful and old-world habits. But a little over forty years afterwards it was again brought into prominence by the disembarkation on June 11, 1685, of the ill-fated Duke of Monmouth. The spot where he landed is now marked by a stone, and we are told by the historians that the Duke, as he set his foot on shore, fell upon his knees and thanked God for having preserved him thus far in his enterprise, and implored the Divine blessing upon his undertaking.

A few months afterwards the unfortunate town, where for some time Monmouth had remained recruiting and drilling his forces, had to pay dearly for its connection with him.

Early in September Judge Jeffreys condemned at Dorchester thirteen Lyme Regis persons, several of whom were mere lads, for the part they had taken in the late rebellion, and these were executed in Lyme on September 12. One of the victims was a Dorchester youth of family and fortune, and of him Macaulay writes, "He was regarded as the model of a fine gentleman." This young fellow was engaged to the sister of the High Sheriff, and she threw herself at the feet of Jeffreys, begging for the life of her betrothed; but the judge drove her from him with a hideous jest.

From the date of the Monmouth rebellion the history of Lyme has been quite uneventful, and little of the trade which it once enjoyed with foreign ports, more especially that of Morlaix in Brittany, now remains. In its early days salt, wine, wool, and a good

trade in elephants' tusks and gold dust brought from the African coasts did something towards maintaining the prosperity of the town; and for years there was also a considerable trade in serges and linens, which was destroyed during the latter part of the seventeenth century by the war with France. The general commerce of the town may be said to have declined from that date until the end of the eighteenth century, when it became practically extinct.

The prosperity it enjoys at the present day is not commercial, nor from its activity as a port, but has arisen of late years by reason of its coming into notice as a seaside holiday resort of a quiet type. It possesses few buildings of any note; but the church of St Michael, which is a Perpendicular building carefully restored, is worth a visit. It contains an interesting Jacobean gallery and pulpit. During the siege the three best bells in the tower were cast into cannon.

The famous Cobb or pier, which is some 1180 feet in length, partakes rather of the nature of a break-water, although its chief use nowadays is to form a popular promenade. It probably dates from the time of Edward I., and has done something to prevent the encroachment of the sea, which used to cause the inhabitants of Lyme a considerable amount of anxiety.

Although the trade of the port has of late years still further declined, the little harbour is picturesque, and into it still come a considerable number of coasting vessels; and there is an export trade of cement stones of some value.

There are several literary associations with the town of Lyme Regis, for it was here that Miss Mitford spent a considerable portion of her youth, in the early years of the last century; and here, too, stayed Jane Austen on several occasions, in a large white cottage at the harbour end of the little parade. The authoress not only in all probability wrote at least portions of her novels at Lyme, but wove into the fabric of one in particular descriptions of scenery and characters which were more or less transcripts from life. *Persuasion*, at all events, contains much Lyme Regis matter, and Bay Cottage sets up a claim to be the original of Captain Harville's house. And it was from the steep flight of steps of the famous Cobb itself that Louisa Musgrove made her tragic leap.

At various times many other literary celebrities, including the late Lord Tennyson, have visited or stayed at Lyme; finding in its quietude and beautiful scenery rest for the body and inspiration for the mind.

Lyme Regis is scarcely likely ever to re-develop into importance, but it still possesses many features of interest, more especially for the geologist and the lover of wild and beautiful scenery.

A little distance to the west of the town is the "under-cliff," from which very fine panoramic views are obtainable, and not far from here is a spot of some considerable historical interest called White Chapel Rocks, from its having been the secret meeting-place for worship of Dissenters during the times of persecution which succeeded the Restoration. Lyme Regis

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and the immediate neighbourhood present a very fair specimen of a certain type of Wessex coast scenery, and the district is picturesque. Nowadays during the summer months visitors add an air of life and activity to the town which seems strangely out of character with its old-world air and atmosphere.

CHAPTER V

SOME TOWNS OF NORTH WESSEX

In the north of Wessex there lies a group of towns forming by their position almost the three points of an equilateral triangle, with a fourth town but a little distance outside the area so covered. The first of the four, Sherborne, is close on the Somersetshire borders, and there are few more prettily situated places in the whole of the north of Wessex. Easily reached from almost all parts of the county by excellent roads and by two lines of railway, it is as accessible as any town in Wessex.

Much still remains of interest in Sherborne, which is pleasantly placed on the southern slope of a steep hill overhanging the valley of the river Yeo. It is, like many another Wessex town, more old-world-looking than actually possessed of great pretensions to loveliness ; but with its grand abbey church, equal to many a cathedral, and its ancient grammar school, it could never be considered entirely lacking in elements of beauty. And there are in addition to these buildings a large number of the old houses still remaining, although, alas ! not a few of them have in quite recent

years been spoiled by the process of restoring and refronting. To the south side of the river the ground rises, and it is here that some beautiful public walks have been laid out, commanding a wide view of the valley and surrounding country.

The Anglo-Saxon name of the town, Scireburn, is derived from the clearness of the water of the river Yeo or Ivel; "scir" meaning bright, and "burn" brook.

As is the case with so many ancient Wessex towns, few records that are reliable remain of its early history; but that it must have been a place of considerable importance at the commencement of the eighth century, in the time of King Ina, is almost beyond dispute, for that monarch here founded a magnificent and afterwards very rich abbey, and in the year A.D. 705 Sherborne was chosen as the seat of a bishopric. The first of the line of bishops, who number in all twenty-six, was the famous Aldhelm, afterwards canonised. William of Malmesbury tells us in the days of the first bishop the people were but half-civilised barbarians, and little inclined to pay attention to either religious discourses or observances. "Wherefore," runs the chronicle, "the holy man (Aldhelm) used to place himself upon the bridge near the town and stop the passers-by by singing them ballads of his own composing. By this means he gradually gained the favour and attention of the populace, and, by mixing grave and religious things with those of a jocular kind, insensibly by this means

succeeded in turning their attention towards religion better than he could have done by mere sermonising."

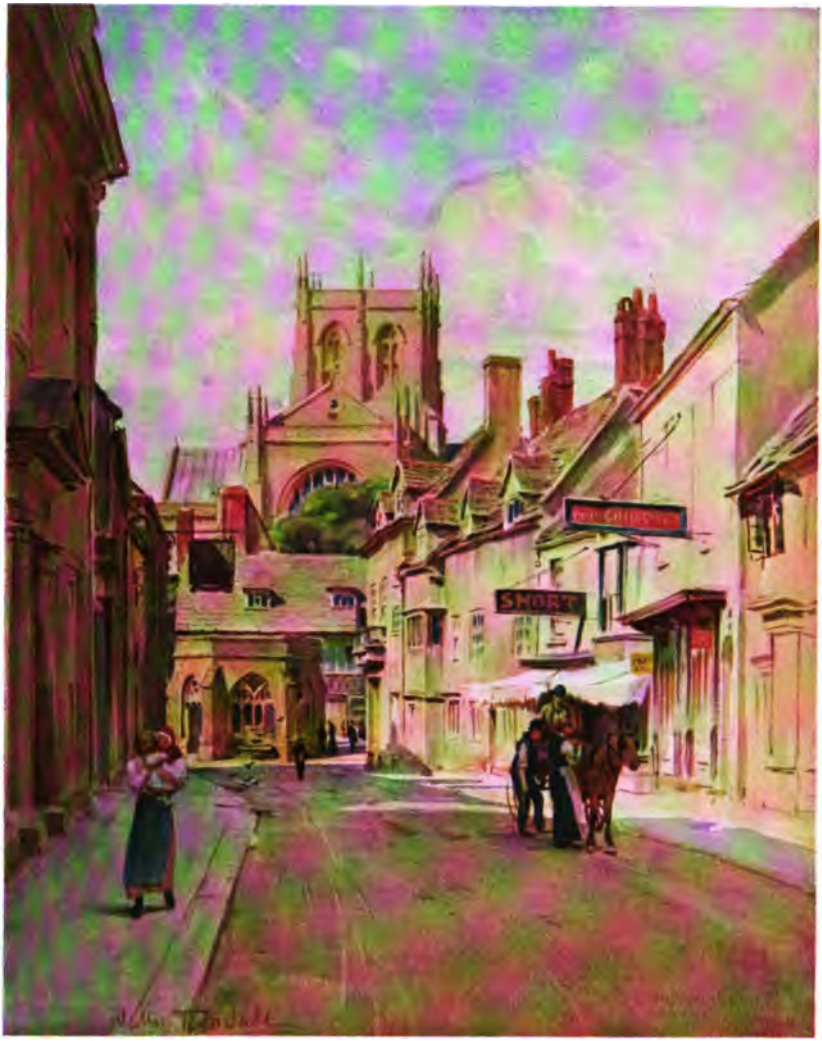
Amongst the famous "fighting" bishops of Sherborne, several of whom fell in conflicts with the Danes, was Asser, the friend and biographer of Alfred the Great (A.D. 900), and there were several others who took prominent parts in the endeavours of the West Saxons to repel the invaders. The last of the bishops of Sherborne was Herman, who in 1078 removed the see to Old Sarum.

During a considerable period of time the town held the position of being not only the capital of the kingdom of Wessex, but also both in size and importance the second city in England after Winchester. This was probably owing not a little to its position in the extreme north-western corner of Dorset, and on the high ground, which made it more easy of defence and gave it for some years immunity from attacks by the Danish pirates. Here, in this far corner of the country, the English held their own against the Northmen, and here Ealhstan, who was the first to successfully withstand the Danes, and the two kings, Ethelbald and Ethelbert, brothers of King Alfred, were buried. Later on Sherborne suffered severely from the ravages of the invaders, by whom it was plundered and burned.

At the commencement of the tenth century its ecclesiastical importance was reduced, and from that point its career for many years was one of decline. At quite the end of the tenth century Ethelred the Unready gave Bishop Wulfsey III. leave to introduce the

LONG STREET, SHERBORNE

The "Sherton Abbas" of the Wessex Novels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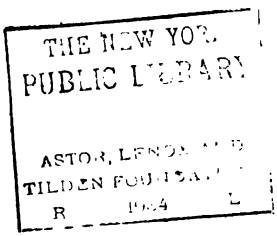
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Order of St Benedict into Sherborne Monastery ; and, so the chroniclers state, in view of the then expected Second Advent very severe reforms in the interest of religion and morality were adopted.

In the Domesday Book it appears that the bishop was also temporarily lord of the town, whilst nine neighbouring manors were devoted to the maintenance of the monks whose abbot he was. In the reign of Henry I., however, Roger of Caen, the King's chief minister, separated the two offices of bishop and abbot.

Not the least interesting fact in connection with the beautiful Abbey of Sherborne is that of its growth, which seems to have been coincident with that of the religious sentiment of the country at large ; and indeed in its architecture may still be traced the different periods of the religious life of the district.

During the fifteenth century very considerable differences occurred between the inhabitants of Sherborne and the monks. These arose from the fact that the latter had allowed the former to use the lower portion of the nave of the abbey as a parish church, thus bringing about a state of affairs by which the abbey became part conventual and part parochial in character. This arrangement seems to have satisfied neither party ; and towards the end of the fourteenth century the Abbot erected a large chapel with six bays at the west end of the abbey church for the use of the townsfolk. This building was known as All Hallows. The strained relationship which existed between the townspeople

and the monks seems to have culminated in 1436–37, when a question arose as to whether the children of the townspeople should be baptized in a new font erected by certain parishioners in the parish church or in the abbey font, which latter had been removed by the monks from its original position to an inconvenient part of the church. The monks had at the same time blocked up a certain door of communication between the two churches, situated in the western end of the south aisle, to the great annoyance and inconvenience of the parishioners. These took the extraordinary means of ventilating their grievance by an unseemly ringing of bells, which disturbed the conventual services.

The situation created by this action ultimately became so acute that in 1437 a direct appeal was made to Robert Nevil, Bishop of Salisbury, who in his ordinance, made upon this matter, directed "that the said font which had been thus newly and with daring rashness erected should be altogether destroyed and removed and carried out of the church by those who have caused it to be erected": adding "that the baptismal font of the said monastery should be set up and replaced in its old accustomed place, and that the infants born or to be born in the said town should be baptized therein according to ancient custom, and that the aforesaid intermediate door and entrance for the procession of the parishioners to reach the font shall be enlarged and arched, so as to give more ample space, and restore it to its previous form."

It would appear that the Bishop realised that there

were faults on both sides, and his ordinance appeared to be a very diplomatic one. But nevertheless his ruling failed to give satisfaction, and we are told that a stout butcher named Walter Gallor, who sided with the monks, took upon himself to break the new font, to the great exasperation of the townsfolk, which culminated in a riot, when we are told "the latter were aided by the Erle of Huntindune lying in those quarters." During the disturbance a priest of the parish church shot a shaft with fire into that part of the abbey dividing the eastern portion used by the monks from the west used by the townspeople, and as at that time it chanced that the part of the roof into which the arrow was shot was thatched, it was set on fire, and a great part of the church was damaged, and the lead and bells melted.

This catastrophe rendered necessary the rebuilding of a portion of the church, and the whole eastern wing was pulled down and the present beautiful choir erected, during the time of Abbot Bradford (1437–59). The townspeople were compelled, by reason of the destruction wrought by their rioting, to contribute substantially to the cost of rebuilding. On completion of the new choir, the old nave was rebuilt in the Perpendicular style by the Abbot Peter de Rampisham (1475–1504). It would seem, from the fact that the Norman piers of the nave were not taken down, but merely re-cased, that this portion of the church suffered less from the fire. The transepts still retain their Norman masonry, but have had large

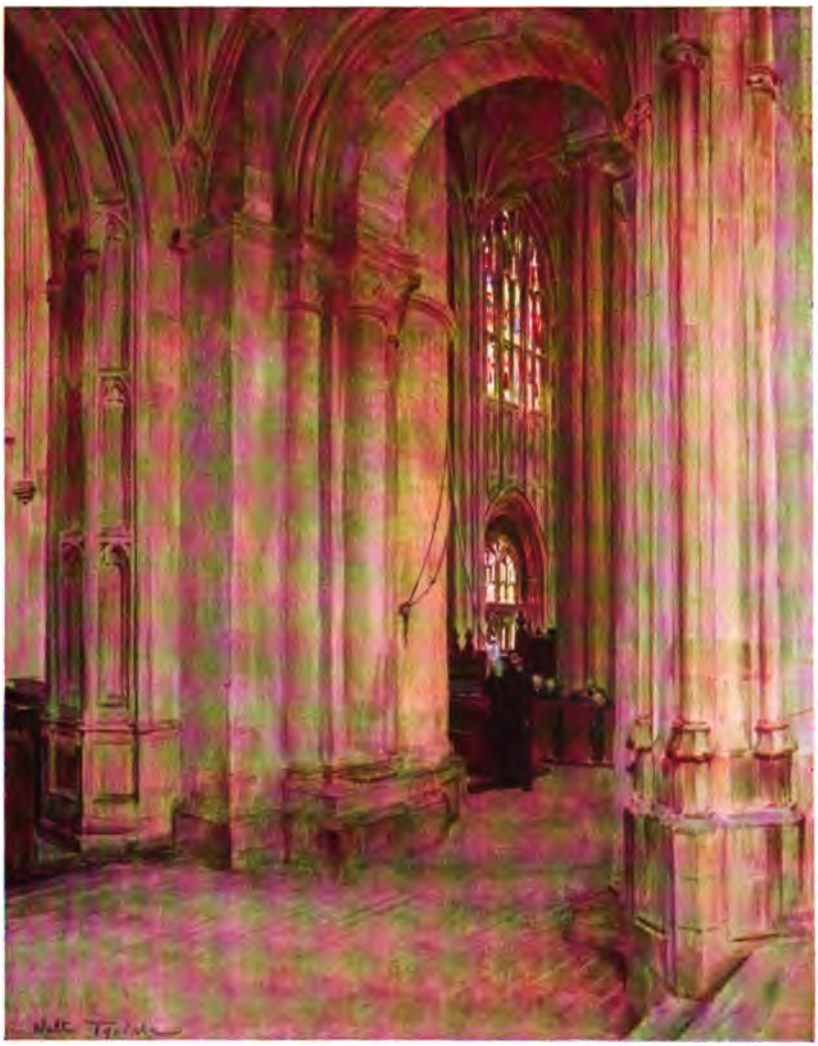
Perpendicular windows inserted, with roofs of the same style. The three tower arches, with their plain Norman semicircles, look strangely out of character in the midst of the richness of surrounding architecture. The great tenor bell of the abbey was the gift of Cardinal Wolsey, and was the smallest of seven brought over by him from his see of Tournay. It bears the following motto :

> By Wolsey's gift I measure time for all :
> To mirth, to grief, to church, I serve to call.

Wolsey was in the early part of his ecclesiastical career at Limington, near Ilchester.

The interior of the church is of great beauty, and especially noticeable is the framed roof of the south transept, which is of black Irish oak. The church contains several memorials of the Digby family, and an interesting epitaph by Pope to the children of Lord Digby (1727). Both the nave and choir are very fine, the former being most elaborate in its ornamentation, and having bays and a clerestory of five-light windows in the Perpendicular style. A notable feature of the clerestory is its extreme height in proportion to that of the church itself. The choir possesses three bays, with a lofty clerestory, and the enrichments of the groined roof are very noticeable. The glass in the clerestory windows contains figures of the saints and bishops of Sherborne, the reredos depicting in high relief the Ascension and the Last Supper, set within a moulding of Caen stone. Very exquisite are the throne, sedilia,

INTERIOR OF ABBEY, SHERBORNE



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and the carved work of the stalls. The north choir aisle contains two interesting altar-tombs, one bearing the figure of Abbot Clement (1163), and another of an unknown ecclesiastic.

Of the various chapels, that of the Holy Sepulchre occupies the east angle of the south transept, whilst that of St Catherine is in the west angle. The supposed burial-place of King Ethelbert and King Ethelbald is in the procession path behind the high altar. Bishop Roger's chapel is situated north of the choir aisle, and the Wickham chapel, containing the fine canopy tomb of Sir John Horsey, who died 1546, is situated on the eastern side of the north transept.

The old chapter-house was under the dormitory, and was a vaulted building in the Early English style, the walls being adorned with frescoes; but where it stood is now the lawn of the headmaster of the school. The Early English Lady Chapel, which was situated to the east of the choir, escaped the fire in 1437, and was, according to Leland, a very fine example of the work of the period; but at the dissolution of the monasteries by Henry VIII. it was partly pulled down. The portion left standing, and also the chapel of Our Lady of Bow, which had been built at the eastern end of the south aisle by Robert de Rampisham, was then turned into a residence for the headmaster of the school founded by Edward VI. in 1550. When the new schoolhouse was built, the old one was turned into a school hospital. The delicate fan-tracery vault of the chapel of Our Lady of Bow formerly formed the

ceiling of the drawing-room, and a portion of the fine Early English vaulting of the Lady Chapel itself is still to be seen in one of the bedrooms.

The whole church presents a wonderfully rich and harmonious picture, equalled in general effect by no other Wessex church; and, indeed, its beauty of design and decoration is in many respects unique. From the choir, looking south-west, the exquisite windows and decorations of the roof are seen to full advantage, and even the effect of the ancient fire, which is to be traced in the deep red of the stone-work, appears in places to add beauty and a mellowness to the whole.

The present beauty and good repair of this fine abbey church are almost entirely due to the splendid and, alas! unusual munificence of the Digby family, who first in 1848 and afterwards in 1856 completed the nave, transepts, choir, and aisles, at a cost of more than £30,000. Scarcely too much praise can be bestowed upon the extraordinary skill and success of Messrs Carpenter & Slater, in whose hands the work of restoration was placed. Many authorities are wont to point to the restoration of Sherborne Church as reaching that high ideal at which all such attempts, if undertaken, should aim.

Of the remains of the abbey buildings, which originally were very extensive, and lay on the north of the church, little can now be discovered, and all these traces have been incorporated in the buildings of the Grammar School, which has so high a reputation

amongst Wessex teaching institutions. The present dining-hall was built in 1670, and was the old school-room, and it contains a statue of its founder.

The old Guesten Chamber or hall, with its very fine oak roof, now serves the purpose of the library, which contains some 6500 volumes, some of great value, including some volumes of old music and an excellent Aldine "Euripides." This was once and for a considerable period used as a silk-mill. Adjoining is the chapel built in 1855 by Mr Slater, whilst further north are the remains of the Abbot's house. The head-master's house, dormitories, and other offices occupy a position on the eastern side of the court.

In the town itself, which contains many old buildings, the chief objects of antiquarian and artistic interest are the ancient or Abbey Conduit, built in 1349, by Archbishop Frith, standing at the bottom of Chepe Street, to which spot it was removed by Sir John Horsey from its original position in the centre of the cloisters; and the Church House, sadly mutilated, but interesting and deserving notice, situated on the south side of the Abbey Close, facing Half Moon Street.

Few visitors to this ancient and interesting town will overlook the fine Almshouse, or, as it was originally called, the Hospital of St John Baptist, founded in 1406 on the lines of a still older organisation. The buildings erected in 1448 present many features of interest, including the hall and dormitories, each opening to the east into a chapel. New buildings

of a really admirable type were erected in 1865 by Mr Slater.

To other interesting and picturesque buildings of a domestic character it is unnecessary to refer in detail; but wanderers in Wessex who possess a love for ancient things and the seeing eye for beauty or quaintness in architecture will find very little difficulty in discovering these for themselves. There are in Long Street, towards the eastern part of the town, several old houses worthy of examination.

The ancient castle, of which considerable remains are still standing on a small wooded hill, was a place of strength and importance from very early times, and was the principal residence of the Bishops of Sherborne. William the Conqueror confirmed it to the see of Sarum in the early part of his reign. The existing castle, of which the keep and the gatehouse are the chief remains, was built by Bishop Roger, chancellor to King Henry I., in 1107–42. Afterwards, the Bishop having joined the party of the Empress Maud, the fortress was seized in 1139 by King Stephen, recaptured a little later by the Empress's forces, and remained as Crown property under various excuses for a period of more than two hundred years, when it was regranted to Bishop Wyvill in 1355.

At the dissolution of the monasteries and the various changes which overtook Church property in the reign of Edward VI., the castle was given to the Protector Somerset, but a little later was restored to the see, and finally passed into the hands of Sir Walter Raleigh.

He was charged with having persuaded Bishop Coldwell to release the property to the Crown on being elected to the see of Salisbury; but before Raleigh's fall out of favour he made over the estate to his son. Owing, however, to an accidental error in the deed, made by a copying clerk, who omitted the words, "ye said Sir Walter shall stand and be seized" of the property, James I. was able to dispute the title, and bestowed the castle and its lands on his favourite, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, although it is stated by the chroniclers of the time that Lady Raleigh begged the King on her knees not to deprive her son of his inheritance.

The King's reply in broad Scotch was: "I maun hae the lond; I maun hae it for Carr."

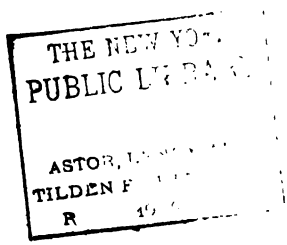
Raleigh, on his journey to be imprisoned in the Tower, passed in full view of Sherborne, and, possibly with a premonition of the fate which was to overtake him, said, sweeping his hands towards the wooded lands and the beautifully situated castle: "All this was once mine, but has passed away."

A curious and interesting circumstance in connection with this Castle of Sherborne is the curse uttered by Osmund, the Norman knight made Earl of Dorset by William the Conqueror, with the grant of the castle and barony, who afterwards, entering a religious life, became Bishop of Sarum and gave Sherborne, with other lands, to the bishopric. The curse ran: "That whosoever should take those lands from the bishopric, or diminish in great or in small, should be accursed

not only in this world but also in the world to come, unless in his lifetime he made restitution thereof." This curse seems to have been fulfilled in strangely numerous instances. Firstly the Montacutes, Earls of Sarum, after most of them had passed through troubled careers, became extinct; then the Duke of Somerset, another owner, left the castle for the Tower and death; Sir Walter Raleigh lost possession of the property as well as his life; Prince Henry only survived a few months after it came into his possession; and the career of Robert Carr, the Earl of Somerset, its next owner, closed in ignominy and shame. It then reverted to the Crown, and passed by grant of King James to Sir George Digby, afterwards created Earl of Bristol.

During the Civil War in 1642 it was early attacked by the Parliamentary forces under the Earl of Bedford, being defended by the Marquis of Hertford. By a strange chance the besieging Earl's sister, Lady Ann Digby, was staying at the castle. She rode to her brother's quarters with the object of persuading him to abandon the siege, telling him, when she found him obdurate, that if he continued in his attempts to demolish the castle he should find his sister's bones buried beneath its ruins. This appeal, however, had no effect on the Earl, who appears to have redoubled his efforts to gain possession of the fortress; and so hard pressed did the besieged become that the Marquis at last offered to surrender on certain conditions, and threatened that if these were not

SHERBORNE COLLEGE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accepted he would place the Earl's sister as a flag of defiance above the battlements. The Earl seems to have at last been softened in his purpose, and on the fifth day he raised the siege.

Three years later, when the castle was under the governorship of Sir Lewis Dives, it was attacked by General Fairfax, and capitulated after a siege of sixteen days. A large number of Royalist gentlemen, including Sir Lewis Dives and Sir John Strangeways, were captured; and the castle, as was the case with many another that had held out for the King, was destroyed by order of the Parliament, and eventually some of the material was taken from the ruins for the purpose of building the present mansion, and the church at Castleton.

The last historical incident of any importance connected with Sherborne Castle occurred in 1688, when William of Orange, on his way to London, after landing in Torbay, slept one night at the present mansion.

Of the once strong and famous fortress little now remains. The castle nowadays occupied by the Digby family is in part the lodge erected by Sir Walter Raleigh, with the additions made by the Earl of Bristol after the Restoration. Over the central doorway appear the arms of Sir Walter and the date 1594. Beautifully situated, this interesting mansion is worthy of note by reason of the many important and valuable pictures, including one of Queen Elizabeth, which it contains.

In the fine surrounding pleasure-grounds, with the beautiful stretch of ornamental water concerning which the poet Pope wrote so enthusiastically, is a stone seat upon which, tradition asserts, Sir Walter Raleigh used to sit and smoke, and doubtless meditate upon the New World which he had visited.

Sherborne of the present day is one of the most picturesquely placed towns of Wessex, and in its life is just that flavour of old-time placidity and absence of turmoil which is also so markedly a feature of many another Wessex town.

The road from Sherborne to Shaftesbury passes through sixteen miles of some of the prettiest scenery in Wessex, and crosses the famous Blackmore Vale midway between the two towns. Known formerly as the White Hart Forest, this fertile and secluded valley, through which the little river Cale flows to meet the Stour, with its old-world ways and rich pasture, is a spot, still little known to strangers, though frequented by artists, well worthy of a visit from those who appreciate rural and idyllic life.

In the days of Henry III. the White Hart Forest was one of the Royal hunting-grounds, and it is recorded that the King levied a perpetual fine on the whole district by reason of the fact that a gentleman slew in the forest a white hart of such unusual beauty that Henry himself had spared it whilst hunting. Here are still to be found such oaks as throve in the Middle Ages, and the well-watered vale is indeed a spot of

beauty and of quietude. Travellers who have come from the coast and have crossed the bold chalk ridges that shut it in to the south will come upon this secluded tract of pasture and forest land almost suddenly. The contrast with the bare downs, low hedges, and white, dusty lanes to the south is a marked one. In this sheltered valley the fields are richer in herbage, though smaller in extent, and the main prospect from the heights above is one of "a broad, rich mass of grass and trees mantling the minor hills and dales within the major."

William Barnes, the Dorset poet, who was born at Rusha, near the southern end of the long valley, was a great admirer of the Blackmore Vale, and he calls it "the valley of sunny slopes, shady lanes, woody dales, picturesque trees and rivulets," and he goes on to say: "You cannot proceed a quarter of a mile without seeing a pretty cottage with its honey-suckled porch, garden, and healthy children playing about."

It is through such scenery as this that the main road approach to Shaftesbury is made; and the town, truly a hill town, presents at first sight a wonderfully picturesque appearance. The houses, built on the side of the hill or on the hill-crest itself, amongst the trees which shade its southern slopes, are almost Continental in their irregularity and disposition. Shaftesbury is one of the "old, ancient" towns of Wessex—so old, indeed, that almost all its history is of a more or less traditional character.

Wessex

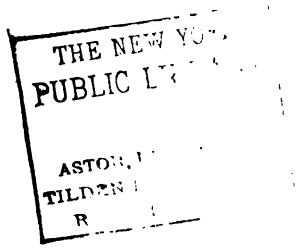
Once known by the name Caer Pallador, a designation pregnant with romance and almost inspiring dreams of knights and squires riding through its narrow streets, it was early in the history of Wessex a place of considerable importance; and its magnificent abbey, founded 1200 years ago by Alfred the Great, was famous throughout the length and breadth of the countryside, and was of such note that the King's daughter Elgiva herself was appointed the first abbess, and there afterwards was laid to rest. It is not to be wondered at that, with a royal abbess at the head of the convent, many of the daughters of the noble families in Wessex were soon found within its walls.

The chief buildings stood on the southern edge of the hill, and enjoyed a magnificent prospect of vale and uplands stretching southward and westward towards the distant coast. But of the beautiful and romantic abbey little now remains except some of the buttresses on the hillside which uphold the retaining walls.

The town is certainly one of the oldest in Wessex, for, though its history is so traditional, Geoffrey of Monmouth claims as its founder Hudibras, grandfather of King Lear, at a date nearly a thousand years before Christ, and reports the quaint idea that a "royal bird," the eagle, spoke whilst the wall of the town was being built. Other historians, however, Brampton among the number, are in favour of the tradition that Shaftesbury owed its origin to Cassivelaunus in the middle of the first century of the Christian era.

BLACKMORE VALE FROM SHAFTESBURY

A scene in *Jude the Obscure*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Ancient Shaftesbury

The history of Shaftesbury has been marked by much of import not only to the town itself but to Wessex at large, and very early in it tragedy plays a part. It was to this place that the body of King Edward the Martyr was brought in 901 from Wareham by Elphere, Earl of Mercia, and laid to rest "with great pomp and much sorrowing after the treacherous murder by Elgiva at Corfe Castle," in the presence of Archbishop Dunstan, Alfwold, Bishop of Sherborne, and Wulfrith, Abbess of Milton, and her nuns. And it was to the abbey that for many years pilgrims resorted, owing to the miraculous cures said to be wrought at the saint's tomb, from all parts to touch or see the famous relic, till the religious foundation became one of the richest and most magnificent in the kingdom. For some considerable time, indeed, both the town and abbey were known, in consequence of its being the burial-place of Edward, as Edwardstow. A few years after the burial of Edward the Martyr, Edward the Elder confined his niece Elfivina in the convent because of her love for one of his enemies.

About this time Shaftesbury and its churches and religious foundations almost rivalled their famed prototype at Glastonbury, which makes the chronicler Fuller state that, if the abbess of the one might wed the abbot of the other, their heir would be richer in lands than the King of England himself.

In the first year of the eleventh century King Ethelred gave to the convent the town of Bradford,

that the nuns within it might have a safe retreat from the Danes. And by this gift one gets a glimpse not only of the widespread nature of the Danish marauders' operations, but also of the terror that even inland Wessex towns felt lest the invaders should approach.

In 1035 King Canute died at Shaftesbury, and by that date the town had attained to such importance that it is stated there were no less than a dozen churches within its boundaries. The King on his accession had the right to nominate a nun as head of the convent, and thus it was that, if only the records of this abbey had been preserved, many a name famous in Wessex would have been found upon them.

A curious piece of conventual history not unconnected with Shaftesbury occurs in the chronicles of the thirteenth century; for we read of an Archbishop of Canterbury excommunicating one Sir Osbert Gifford, knight, in 1286, for stealing two nuns out of his monastery at Wilton, and only pardoning him on the following conditions: that he should never after enter into a nunnery or the company of nuns; and that he should for three Sundays following be whipped in the parish church of Wilton, and for a like number of times in the market-place and parish of Shaftesbury. In addition to this, the unfortunate knight was to fast for many months, and not to wear a shirt for three years, nor take upon him the habit or title of knight, nor wear any apparel save only that made of russet colour with lamb or sheep-skins.

But perhaps the hardest condition of all was that he should restore to the convent the nuns whom he had stolen !

Of the general history of the town little is known until the time of the dissolution of monasteries, when the beautiful abbey appears to have been one of the first to be absolutely rased to the ground ; and although a few traces have been discovered since July 1861, very little even of the foundations remains of this once magnificent structure. The eastern end has, however, been excavated to a depth of some 10 feet, and other portions have been from time to time discovered which enable the skilled antiquarian to gauge the scale and magnificence of the original building with some exactitude. The foundations of the high altar are well preserved, and portions of the steps remain. The width of the main building appears to have been some 75 feet. It seems possible that the tomb, once canopied, discovered at the north side of the altar may have been that of King Edward the Martyr.

Of the twelve churches we have referred to, only two now remain, St Peter's and Holy Trinity. The former is an ancient building in the Perpendicular style, and originally had the aisles and clerestory running the whole length of the church. The northern wall in the High Street has a remarkably rich and interesting battlemented parapet, carved with roses, pomegranates, and portcullises—a form of ornamentation which was in favour in the early years of Henry

VIII.'s reign. On the belfry walls are two interesting inscriptions :—

SOUTH WALL

Of all the musick that is play'd or sung,
There is none like bells if they are well rung ;
Then ring your bells well if you can.
Silence is the best for every man.
Then in your ringing make no demur,
But off your hat, your belts, and spurr ;
And if your bell you overset,
The ringer's fee you must expect.

NORTH WALL

What musick is there that compar'd may be
To well-tun'd bells' enchanting melody ;
Breaking with their sweet sound the willing air,
And in the list'ning ear the soul ensnare.
When bells ring round, and in their order be,
They do denote how neighbours should agre ;
But if they clam, the harsh sound spoils the sport,
And 'tis like women keeping Dover Court.

And in the Tower, on the six bells, are some quaint mottoes :—

1. A wonder great my eye I fix,
   Where was but three you may see six. 1684. T.P.

2. When I do ring, prepare to pray. R.A.S.T.B. 1670.

3. William Cockey, bell-founder, 1738.

4. Mr. Henry Saunders and Mr. Richard Wilkins, c^h. w^dn.
   W.C. 1738.

A SAXON CHURCH IN WESSEX

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5. While thus we join in Chearful sound,
   May love and loyalty abound.
   H. Oram, c.warden.
   R. Wells, Aldbourne, fecit, 1776.

6. When you hear me for to toll,
   Then pray to God to save the soul.
   Anno Domini 1672. T.H.R.W.C.W.T.P.

Holy Trinity, once an important church, and still the chief one of the town, was pulled down and entirely rebuilt in 1842. Unfortunately, this happened before the revival in ecclesiastical architecture. The result is a rather commonplace and inelegant structure.

During the great Civil War Shaftesbury was occasionally the scene of minor skirmishes, and was alternately held by the forces of the King and the Parliament. In 1644 a considerable body of mercenaries who were hired to aid the rebellion overran the country round about the town, quartering themselves on the peaceful inhabitants of the latter, and fining some of them at their own sweet will as much as £1000 each.

A neutral body of Clubmen, formed with the intention of protecting the district from both Royalists and Parliamentarians, met in the August of the following year, when fifty of their leaders were seized by Fleetwood and his troopers, who had descended on the town for that purpose from Sherborne, and the main body was afterwards defeated by Cromwell himself at Hambledon Hill, some ten miles distant.

Shaftesbury, standing as it does on a hill, was formerly but indifferently supplied with spring-water, and the

supply of this had, therefore, in olden days to be brought on horses' backs from a spot near Motcombe, in the parish of Gillingham. But eventually, by the generosity of the then Marquis of Westminster, to whom the estates belonged, engines and reservoirs were constructed in the town itself, conveying a good supply of pure water direct to the houses. In connection with this ancient method of obtaining water there arose a curious custom. On the Monday before Holy Thursday the Mayor proceeded, accompanied by many of the townsfolk, to Enmore Green, Motcombe, with a large broom or besom decked like a May-garland, and this, with a calf's head, a pair of gloves, a gallon of ale, and two penny loaves, was handed to the steward of the manor as an acknowledgment for the water-supply. At the conclusion of the ceremony these curious properties were returned to the Mayor and brought back to the town with great pomp. This quaint custom, however, was discontinued about the end of the third decade of the last century.

Close by here, at Motcombe, resided the original of Fielding's Parson Trulliber, who was in reality a Rev. Oliver, at one time curate at Motcombe. The great novelist himself resided at East Stower, about five miles from Shaftesbury, in the Manor House, which was pulled down in 1835. The property belonged to his mother, at whose death Fielding had settled there with his first wife ; but owing to reckless extravagance he in three years entirely exhausted the resources of the property. Another character of Fielding's was the

Rev. William Young, at this period incumbent of West Stower, and editor of Ainsworth's Dictionary. He was generally supposed to be the prototype of the novelist's Parson Adams.

From Shaftesbury to Gillingham the main road runs north-west through pretty country, well watered by the streams of the Lidden and Stour; and a stretch of five miles of good and almost straight road takes the traveller to Gillingham, which, situated in the extreme northern corner of the county of Dorset, is one of the most prosperous present-day Wessex towns. Near it three Wessex rivers—the Shreen Water, Lidden, and Stour—unite. The town is surrounded by rich and wooded pasture lands, and is picturesquely situated. It owes its modern prosperity chiefly to the fact that within its confines are situated flour, silk, rope and twine mills, whilst there is also a considerable manufacture of sacking, flax, bricks, and tiles.

Gillingham is one of the ancient towns of Wessex, and is mentioned in the Saxon Chronicle, where there is an account of the battle of Gillingham, fought between Canute the Dane and Edmund Ironside at Penn, just over the border of Somersetshire; but this event, in which the Danes were so disastrously defeated, has always been known as the battle of Gillinga, or Gillingham. It seems more than probable that the flying Danes were pursued from Penn right into Gillingham, as there is still a gate of the town known as Slaughter's Gate; and near this spot many years ago remains of hastily buried bodies

were discovered. On the site of the battle itself there are some very interesting remains of trenches or fortifications.

Just a quarter of a century later, Malmesbury states, a grand council was held at Gillingham, at which Edward the Confessor was elected King; and at the end of the eleventh century King William Rufus himself, probably whilst on a hunting expedition, met the Archbishop Anselm here. And there was also a hunting lodge hard by much in favour with the earlier kings of England. King John visited it frequently, and it is recorded that Edward I. spent his Christmas here in 1270.

In ancient times it was a royal forest, frequently assigned as a dowry to the wife of the King, and it was thus held in succession by Margaret of France, Margaret of Anjou, and by no less than three of Henry VIII.'s wives — Jane Seymour, Catherine Howard, and Catherine Parr,—and also by Ann of Denmark.

The church, once a beautiful and ancient fabric, was restored in the early part of the nineteenth century, except the chancel, which is a good example of the Decorated style. It is now a rather meagre-looking Gothic building, but it contains some interesting memorials.

Of the old palace of Gillingham, which was erected by Saxon or Norman kings to serve them as a residence when hunting in the neighbourhood, hardly any traces, save overgrown foundations, remain; but from

A WESSEX DAIRY FARM

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these antiquarians are able to trace its size and importance.

In Gillingham itself there are few old buildings left, but it is a pleasantly situated town, with much of interest in the country round about it. Here was born Charles Gildon, the poet Pope's bitter critic, of whom it was said that he wrote *The English Art of Poetry*, which he had practised himself very unsuccessfully in his dramatic performances, and thus he seems to have carried out the adage that "a critic is one who has failed in literature."

To reach Blandford, a central Wessex town, by the most picturesque and desirable manner, the wayfarer must return to Shaftesbury, from whence run two roads presenting widely different features of scenery, but both of almost the same length and equally desirable from a picturesque point of view. The upper road runs for some distance along a ridge of high chalk downs, and is of course somewhat hilly; but the traveller who takes it will be well repaid by the magnificent prospect which lies spread out beneath him. On the left hand, to the eastward, is the wooded expanse of Cranborne Chase and distant, rising uplands; whilst on the right hand, to the west, is a wide expanse of well-watered and fertile valley, through which the Stour meanders in wonderful convolutions. And in this valley are scattered some of the prettiest villages of all Wessex.

The lower road is easier and less hilly; but whilst it is picturesque and extremely pretty in places, there is not the wide open prospect which is obtainable along

the hill road. The last mile or two of this valley road winds quite close to the Stour, two or three lovely peeps of which are obtainable through gaps in the hedges and during the last ascent into Blandford.

This little market town, which takes its name from one of the chief fords of the beautiful river Stour, is a typical Wessex town of an old-world yet prosperous type. Lying within a bend of the river Stour, it is almost surrounded by meadows and woods, and in the town itself are many trees, springing up, patches of greenery, amidst the sea of picturesque gables, chimneys, and weather-stained roofs. Environing it are airy downs and open country, which render its surroundings very healthy and bracing. Seen from the railway embankment, it presents a singularly picturesque appearance; and although the town contains comparatively few of its old-time houses, a large proportion of the existing buildings date from a few years after the great fire of 1731.

The derivation of the name Blandford is somewhat obscure; it is probably derived from the British Blaen Ford, that is to say, the front of the ford; and it seems to have arisen from a mistaken idea that it was the ford over the Allen or Alauna, instead of being a ford of the Avon.

Although Blandford is of undoubted antiquity, and has been identified with the settlement of Ibelnium, there are few traces of the Romans or even Saxons in the immediate neighbourhood, nor is it easy to identify the present town with either of those men-

tioned in the Domesday Book. The fact, however, that it was a market so early as the reign of Henry III. may be taken as good evidence of its importance and prosperity at a very early period. Few records, however, survived the terrible fire of 1731, in which all but forty houses were burnt down, and no fewer than fourteen lives lost; and in addition, we are told, "many people died from fright, over-exertion, and grief at the terrible destruction of their property."

Early in its history public horse-races were established, and its markets and fairs in ancient times were important events, not only for the town itself, but also for the district round about. The horse-races were held in high favour by the town authorities as early as the first years of the seventeenth century, for not only do they appear to have worked the races upon a commercial basis, but it is evident, from entries made by the town steward, that these occasions were events of festivity and amusement.

"Professional players" were engaged, and an interesting bill is extant of the cost of their entertainment, and the receipts which were derived, not only from the performances of the play for six nights, but also from the economical sale of such items as bread and beef, fish and candles, suet and dripping left over! Nearly all the country gentry appear to have attended the festivities, and a list of the carriages which were admitted to the course shows in what high favour the entertainment was held by high and low alike.

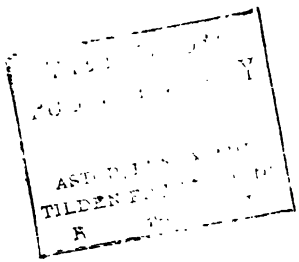
In olden days Blandford, although possessing no

very important or extensive manufacture, was celebrated for the making of band strings, and also for a variety of point lace which the author of *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, in the early part of the eighteenth century, stated was not inferior to the lace of Flanders, France, or Italy. He mentions that the best of it fetched as much as £30 sterling per yard.

The town in the first half of the seventeenth century also possessed at least one maker of stained glass of some note; and it is more than probable that a considerable amount of the stained glass in the churches of Wessex came from the furnaces and shops of the worker who was known as "Old Harding" of Blandford.

The town has played no very important part in history, but it suffered severely for its sturdy loyalty to the King during the Civil War. However, not being a fortified place, it fell a fairly easy prey into the hands of the contending parties; for in May 1643 the Parliamentary authorities despatched a piece of cannon and some men against Blandford, and a little later in the year the Roundhead forces under Sir William Waller levied a contribution of the amount of £500 sterling—in those days a very considerable sum—on the unfortunate townsfolk. A little later the same year further contributions were levied at various times, amounting to a sum of upwards of £1000. The Royalists, when in possession of Blandford, appear to have treated the townsfolk with considerably more leniency, although the county paid very heavy con-

THE ALMSHOUSES, CORSHAM, WILTS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tributions to the Royalist cause. In 1644, Essex and his army lay at Blandford for a short time; and in July of the same year the unfortunate town was plundered by Major Sydenham and other Parliamentary officers.

From that period to the date of the great fire the town's history was uneventful, and, far removed from the coast, it seems to have been much less troubled by fears of the Napoleonic invasion than many other Wessex towns. But if the history of Blandford has been unmarked since the middle of the seventeenth century by any great historical event, it can congratulate itself on having produced many men who were destined to become eminent in the professions of literature, the army, and the Church. Two at least of the Archbishops of England and Ireland, William Wake of Canterbury, Thomas Lindesay of Armagh, besides many ripe scholars, such as Christopher Pitt, Bruno Ryves, Alfred Stevens, the designer of the Wellington monument in St Paul's Cathedral, and Thomas Creech, had for their native place this little Wessex town; and one of the ablest and best of the Nonconformists of the early part of the last century, John Angell James, was also born here.

Of ancient buildings, owing to the fires which have at various times visited and destroyed the town, Blandford possesses few, and its principal church is a comparatively modern building of no particular interest.

On the outskirts of the town are some few remains

of Damory Court, which in the reign of Edward II. was the residence of Roger D'Amorie, Constable of Corfe Castle; and near by stood the famous Damory's Oak, which had the marvellous circumference of 68 feet at its base, and in olden times, being hollow, was inhabited first by a hermit-like individual, and afterwards, so tradition asserts, by a whole family.

In the immediate neighbourhood of the town are several more or less modern country seats, chief amongst which are those of Lord Portman at Bryanston Park, and of Lord Wolverton at Iwerne Minster. The former estate is a very ancient one, and takes its name from Brian de Insula, its owner under King John. It passed into the possession of the Portman family by purchase, and the Portman who was owner at the end of the seventeenth century was one of the first magnates to rally to the standard of William of Orange.

At a little distance further afield from Blandford is the now deserted manor house of Eastbury, which was built by Vanbrugh for George Doddington, once Lord of the Admiralty, out of monies which, report states, he acquired none too honestly during his term of office. Before the lordly pleasure-house which he had planned was completed, Doddington died, leaving it and all his wealth to George Bubb Doddington, who became Lord Melcombe, and spent an almost inconceivable sum in completing the mansion. Here he resided for many years, entertaining a large number of those who were celebrated in Literature and Art; and on his

MELBURY PARK

"King's Hintock Court" in *A Group of Noble Dames*

CHAPTER VI

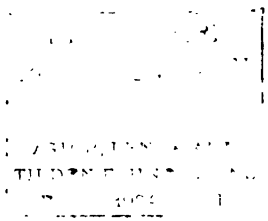
A GROUP OF OUTER WESSEX TOWNS

THERE are many interesting and picturesque towns in what may very properly be called for the purposes of this book "Outer Wessex"; but it is obviously only possible, within the limited compass of a volume of the present type, to include a reference to those which have some outstanding historical, literary, antiquarian, or picturesque interest.

One of the most characteristic types of an old Wessex town is to be found in Dunster, situated on the North Somersetshire coast, nestling almost at the foot of lofty Grabhurst Hill, and distant about three miles from picturesque Minehead. Here, indeed, is a place still typical of the old-world character and the old-world life of many Outer Wessex towns of the days gone by. Quaint, steeply winding streets, a market cross, and an ivy-grown and ancient castle rising above all make a picture of great beauty and charm. And in Dunster folk one still finds types with which Wessex history and Wessex character have become identified.

The town is extremely ancient, and dates from early

DUNSTER CASTLE AND YARN MARKET



Saxon times. In the Domesday Book it is called Torre, which name was probably derived from the fact that from early times there was a fortress built here which was called the Torre or Tower. Afterwards the word *dune*, meaning hill, was prefixed, and the place henceforward became known as Dunestorre, or the castle or tower on a hill, from which, of course, the modern name Dunster is derived.

The town is beautifully situated on the wooded slopes of Grabhurst Hill ; and in the immediate neighbourhood is some of the finest and most lovely scenery of all Outer Wessex. Dunster Church, Castle, the famous Luttrell Arms Inn, and the ancient wooden Yarn Market are the chief objects of interest, although many a quaint house and narrow by-lane, whilst adding to the old-time character of the town, provides additional charm for seekers after the picturesque.

The ancient church, of cruciform character, and possessing a handsome central tower, is far greater in size and importance than one would expect to find in so small a town. Its size, however, is explained from the fact that it was anciently connected with a cell of the Abbey of Bath founded at Dunster in the reign of William the Conqueror by Sir William de Mohun. Of this cell some slight remains were found among the buildings of the farm situated to the north of the choir.

The earliest written record of the church states that the tower was not existent in the last year of the fifteenth century ; but it is probable that there was a church of some size at Dunster far earlier. The

building, as is the case with many other conventual ones, actually contains two churches under one roof; and this state of affairs existed so far back as 1499, when the Abbot of Glastonbury decided that the monastic choir should be reserved for the sole use of the monks, and a new choir be made for the parishioners in the nave of the church itself, in consequence of the dispute which had arisen between the vicar of the parish and the prior of the cell. The choir, formerly reserved for the use of the monks, passed at the dissolution of the monasteries into the hands of the owners of the castle, and was allowed to fall into a terrible state of disrepair. The old priory church and the parish church now form one building, but the interior, owing to want of height in the nave and its rather unusual breadth, is somewhat gloomy and heavy. It has, however, been well restored by Street, the nave being separated from the rest of the church by a notably fine rood screen. There is a curious preservation of one of the original Norman arches of the lantern spanning the nave on the west side of the tower, but a later arch of a concurrent date to that of the tower has been constructed under it. In the choir are several monuments to members of the Mohun and Luttrell families of considerable interest, more particularly the alabaster effigies of a knight and dame in the pretty but mutilated chantry situated on the north side. On the whole, the interior is less impressive than the exterior, and there is little of interest save to the antiquarian and student of architecture.

The Famous Luttrell Arms

Most people who visit Dunster soon seek the beautiful and ancient inn known as the Luttrell Arms, about whose ancient rooms there still hangs a flavour and atmosphere of old-time romance—so marked, indeed, that one almost expects to see knights and dames and esquires seated at the tables or by the fireside, and to hear outside, not the sound of automobile horns, but those of post-chaises and mail-coaches. And at evening, when the shadows fall in the old courtyard and steal in through the ancient windows, one would scarcely be surprised at the sudden advent of some knight of the road in the mask and riding-cloak of the typical highwaymen of romance.

This ancient inn contains a wealth of picturesqueness which the student of architecture and the lover of the beautiful will devoutly hope may be long preserved. The carved ceiling in the "commercial" room is one of great interest and of considerable beauty. Upstairs, in one of the bedrooms, is a richly carved chimney-piece with two full-length women's figures dressed in the costumes of the Elizabethan period, and other carving representing the fable of Actæon. The occupier of this room need never be at a loss for something to interest him, and scarcely anywhere out of the old manor houses of the west country will a finer fireplace be found. The remains of the old chapel are at the back of the house, and there are also some fine mullioned windows in this portion of the building. Just outside the confines of the garden, which in summer is a wealth of flowers and foliage, on the hillside, are the remains of

the earthworks which were constructed by the besieging Parliamentarian forces whilst the attack on the castle was being made.

The Yarn Market, a picturesque wooden gabled building of great interest and antiquity, situated in the centre of the main street, recalls the time when Dunster was noted as a place of manufacture of kerseymere, which in ancient times bore the name of the town; and on the southern slope of Grabhurst Hill are still to be seen the remains of the terraces on which the frames used for drying the cloth stood. This old market hall is almost unique in the west country, and is one of the most interesting survivals of the commercial past in the West.

Dunster Castle, environed by trees, stands above the villlage street upon the Torre, the slopes of which run down to the vale of the Avill, with fine views of the wild hill-crest of Grabhurst and of the neighbouring sea-coast. This fine mediæval stronghold has been the seat of the Mohun and Luttrell families since the reign of Henry IV. It was built in the twelfth century by one William de Mohun, and was held by him during the war between King Stephen and the Empress Maud for the latter. And although the King marched to attack Dunster, he soon abandoned the idea of taking so extraordinarily strong a place by the usual methods of assault, and contented himself by erecting a fort for the purpose of keeping De Mohun in check. And, abandoning any direct attempt on the castle, left Henry de Tracy of Barnstaple, one of his most faithful

THE YARD OF THE LUTTRELL ARMS, DUNSTER

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adherents, in authority to try and prevent Mohun's further devastations of the neighbourhood.

Of the old castle very little now remains; the major portion of the present building was erected in the reign of Elizabeth, but the great gateway is probably "the fair Tourre by north cummying into the castle which was built in the reign of Henry VII. by Sir Hugh Luttrell."

This ancient castle has seen many vicissitudes, and was doubtless in mediæval times one of the greatest strongholds of the west country. Very early in the Civil War it was captured by the Marquis of Hertford and held by him for the King until it was subsequently successfully besieged and captured by Blake in 1646. In 1650 the Parliamentary party seem to have pulled down the magnificent keep, as a means of partially dismantling the place.

In the immediate neighbourhood of Dunster is some of the wildest as well as the most beautiful scenery in Outer Wessex. Exquisite glens and wooded combes along the coast; and inland the great spurs of the Quantock Hills and the wild and stern Exmoor, make the whole district round about one of peculiar variety of charm and picturesqueness.

Between Dunster and Glastonbury lie the beautiful Quantock and Polden Hills, and in the hollow bounded by these two ranges are some of the richest grazing grounds in England, as well as much picturesque if somewhat flat scenery.

Glastonbury is one of the Wessex towns which

undoubtedly owed its old-time importance to the presence of a monastic institution. It was one of the earliest centres of Christianity in England, and it was in those days an island rising in the estuary of the Brue, whose unusually clear waters are popularly supposed to have given the spot its name. It was known in Anglo-Saxon times as Glæstingabyrig, and the modern name of Glastonbury is derived from the British word "glas," signifying blue, from the colour of the waters surrounding it. To the Britons the place was also known by the name of Avalon or "Appletree Island," which name was adopted by the Romans, who called it Insula Avallonia, which was the mystical isle of Avalon, where tradition placed the sepulture of Arthur of romance, where he really only slept, to awake in due time to become the avenger of his country's wrongs. Tennyson wrote of this spot :—

> The island valley of Avilion,
> Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
> Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies
> Deep-meadowed, happy, fair with orchard lawns
> And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea.

It was here that the body of Guinevere was brought for burial from Amesbury, to be interred in the same rude coffin as that of her husband, which had been hollowed from the trunk of an oak-tree.

The spot where they were buried was first marked by two tall stone crosses, between which the royal pair lay for several centuries. But when Henry II. was

at St David's, assembling the fleet with which he was seeking to complete the conquest of Ireland, he requested the Abbot of Glastonbury, who was his nephew, to have the remains of Arthur and Guinevere removed from the open ground in which they lay to a more honourable resting-place within the abbey itself. Tradition states that a search was accordingly made, and at a depth of some sixteen feet an enormous oak trunk was discovered, containing two cavities, in one of which lay the skeleton of a gigantic man some eight feet in height, and in the other the smaller skeleton of a woman. Among the bones of the latter, reputed to be those of traitorous but repentant Guinevere, was found a large and exquisite plait of golden hair, still shining and bright as the day when it graced the head of the woman whose beauty had been sung by so many ancient bards. This, however, crumbled to dust immediately it was touched by a monk, who attempted to raise it from the recess in which it lay. The bones were removed to the church and subsequently reinterred in a spot before the high altar, where they were visited by several royal pilgrims, and were seen by Leyland in the middle of the sixteenth century. For a long time the skulls of Arthur and Guinevere were placed outside the shrine for the adoration of the people, and the abbey became a regular place of pilgrimage, not only for the immediate neighbourhood, but for a largely extended district in the west country.

Glastonbury has a great interest from the fact of its connection with the early religious history not only

of Wessex, but of the country at large. Joseph of Arimathea is by tradition believed to have been the founder of the abbey. The story goes that Joseph was sent here as a missionary with eleven companions by St Philip about A.D. 63, when the latter was preaching in France.

Joseph and his companions appear to have met with great opposition in their efforts to evangelise England, and were compelled to take refuge on the island now known as Glastonbury, but which in those days was covered with thickets and brushwood, and was also rendered almost inaccessible from its position in the boggy estuary of the river Brue. Even eleven centuries later Glastonbury was, according to William of Malmesbury, a town set in a morass, and reached with difficulty and only on foot or horseback. At the time of Joseph of Arimathea's visit it must have been almost inaccessible. It was here, on this deserted spot, that Joseph and his companions built a small wattled chapel in honour of the Virgin.

But Christianity made little progress, the original missionaries died off, and the little chapel was lost sight of until A.D. 166. In that year Pope Eleutherius sent two missionaries to Britain, who in the course of their travels discovered the little chapel and received supernatural information of its origin and its dedication. In consequence of this, they settled on the spot and re-established a religious shrine.

St Patrick himself visited Glastonbury three hundred years later, and became the first Abbot. The fame

GLASTONBURY ABBEY

Walter Tapdale

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of the abbey spread, and it became a favourite place of pilgrimage. It was here that Guildas the historian died in 512, and about twenty years later, at the instance of St Paulinus, Archbishop of York, the little wattled structure of St Joseph was covered with boards and cased in lead as a precious relic. Some hundred and seventy years later, about 700, King Ina, on the advice of St Aldhelm, built and endowed a monastery at Glastonbury, and founded the "Major Ecclesia" in honour of St Peter and St Paul; this was partially destroyed by the Danes, but was thoroughly rebuilt by the great Dunstan, who was born at Glastonbury. It was this building that was the scene of St Dunstan's temptation and his encounter with the Evil One, which has passed into a coarse and melodramatic legend.

Dunstan became Abbot A.D. 940, and was the means of introducing the Benedictine Order of monks into England. King Edwy afterwards expelled and banished him, and it is recorded that a sound like "the wheezy voice of a gleesome hag" was heard as the soldiers were driving him out of the church; and the legend adds that this noise was at once unmistakably recognised by all persons as the exulting voice of the devil!

About one hundred and fifty years later Herlewin pulled down the church and began a much larger and more ornate building; but a few years afterwards the whole was burnt and the precious relics perished.

The work of rebuilding was immediately undertaken

by King Henry II., and when the first part was completed, on the site of the little wattled church of the first missionaries, it was dedicated to St Mary. This chapel has become erroneously known as St Joseph's Chapel by a curious tradition which arose from the fact that the monks were very anxious to identify the abbey with one or other of the famous characters of the New Testament—a desire which was not a little owing to the fact that such identification with St Joseph led to a large number of devotees and pilgrims visiting the spot.

The great church begun by Henry II. proceeded but slowly, owing to the warlike nature of his immediate successor and the fact that the monks were speedily at their wits' end for want of money. It was then they by a lucky inspiration remembered that the body of Dunstan, who had ultimately become Archbishop of Canterbury and had been canonised, which had been removed from Canterbury, was supposed to be buried somewhere amidst the ruins of the destroyed church. His body was promptly sought for, and naturally it, or something else, was discovered; and in spite of the protest of the Canterbury monks, who claimed to possess the Archbishop's remains, the relics immediately began to work miracles and cures, and thus were the means of drawing to Glastonbury a rich flow of offerings made by pilgrims and devotees. Thus it was that the church, of which nowadays only a few magnificent fragments remain, was completed and was duly dedicated in A.D. 1303.

Abbot Whiting

Glastonbury became a mitred abbey, and thus its abbot ranked as the premier one in England till the year 1154, when precedence was given to the Abbot of St Albans. Under its abbots of a later period, during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Glastonbury did a considerable amount of educational work, as it is recorded that "many sons of noblemen and gentlemen were sent to Glastonbury for virtuous education, and returned thence excellently accomplished."

At the time of the Reformation the abbey was ruled over by Abbot Whiting, whose execution was one of the worst of a number of similar judicial crimes which took place during the stormy period of the Reformation.

The Abbot was arrested at his manor house of Sharpham, and conveyed to London and confined in the Tower; but after a short imprisonment he was sent back into Somersetshire, and was, as Froude says, "already condemned at a tribunal where Cromwell sat as prosecutor, jury, and judge." His trial took place on November 14, 1539, in the Bishops' Great Hall at Wells. He was accused of robbing the Church—that is to say, of concealing its sacred vessels and other treasures from the legalised robbers who were just then raiding the monasteries in the West under the direction of Henry VIII.'s minister Cromwell. Again to quote Froude, his crime was "that he was more faithful to the Church than the State, and was guilty of regarding the old ways as better than the new." After a short trial Abbot Whiting was sentenced to death, and was drawn

on a hurdle, accompanied by two of his monks, to the top of Torre Hill, and there put to death. According to the barbarous custom of the age after execution for high treason, his head was fixed over his abbey gate, and the four quarters of his body were sent to Wells, Bath, Ilchester, and Bridgewater, that the sight of them might strike terror into the hearts of all who might be bold enough to question the King's right to do as he listed in his own dominions.

In the following reign the manor of Glastonbury, including the site of the church and abbey, was given by the King to the Duke of Somerset, and the buildings were abandoned and allowed to fall into gradual decay. In the reign of Mary an attempt was made to restore the dismantled abbey, but the death of the Queen prevented the work being carried out.

The place now fell rapidly into disrepair and ruin, and, as happened in so many other cases, the remains of the magnificent abbey got to be regarded as a kind of stone quarry for the neighbourhood, with the result that a large portion was removed piecemeal by various people for use as material for building houses.

During the two years of the last decade of the eighteenth century the ground surrounding the abbey was cleared, levelled, and converted into pasturage; and unhappily many of the beautiful corbels, pinnacles, and carved fragments of the arches were broken up to be used for making a new road over the marshes.

Of the many interesting relics which yet remain of this vast church and its out-buildings, the best preserved

and most interesting of all is the small chapel which was dedicated to the Blessed Virgin, but which is commonly known as St Joseph's Chapel. This little building is one of the most interesting in the ecclesiastical history of the country: erected in 1184, it was made to represent in stone the original wattled structure built by St Joseph and the first missionaries. It is beautifully decorated in a rather florid style, and it remains as unique in character as it is valuable as representing the preservation of a most interesting idea and tradition.

The only abbey building within the actual monastery walls still standing is the magnificent abbot's kitchen, now detached from the chief body of ruins, and affording a curious and ingenious example of the domestic architecture of the time. It is traditionally supposed to have been built by the unfortunate Abbot Whiting, and the fact of it being entirely of stone is said to have arisen from the circumstance that Whiting, after a dispute with the King, who had threatened to burn his kitchen, replied that "he would build such a one that all the wood in the forest should not suffice to carry out his monarch's threat." The tradition goes that the King's threat was intended as a reproach for the luxurious living of the Abbot and his monks.

Another interesting relic of this great Abbey of Glastonbury still happily survives in the Abbot's Barn, which is probably the finest and most richly ornamented of the monastic granaries in the west of England. It

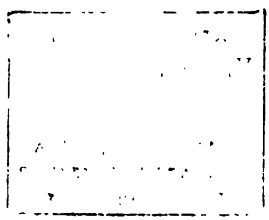
is cruciform in shape, the transepts forming the entrances, and nearly a hundred feet in length, and it has a wonderful collar-beam roof. The four gables have triangular windows with rich traceries and symbols representing the four Evangelists.

In the town of Glastonbury itself are several interesting and ancient buildings, besides a great many fragments well worth the attention of the antiquarian and student of architecture. Of all surviving buildings of a domestic character in the town, none is of greater attractiveness than the old George Inn, which was in ancient days a pilgrims' hostelry. Built in the reign of Edward IV. by Abbot Selwood, it presents, according to several well-known authorities, the best piece of domestic architecture in the town. The front is a magnificent mass of panelling pierced here and there for windows, and the middle of the building is occupied by a four-centred gateway with a bay window on the left to the whole height of the house. Above the gate are the arms of the abbey and of Edward IV., supported by the bull of Clare and the white lion of Mortimer. The interior contains much interesting work.

The tribunal built by Abbot Beere, who also was the builder of St Benedict's Church, as the abbey court-house, still survives, though now used as offices. It possesses a principal room with a wide window of eight lights and a large oriel window above.

The other and principal church in Glastonbury is that of St John the Baptist, a well-restored fifteenth-

GLASTONBURY STEEPLE FROM THE ABBEY GARDENS



century building, which possesses a wonderfully fine tower rising to a height of 140 feet, in three storeys, richly adorned with canopied niches and crowned with an open-work parapet and eight slender pinnacles. This tower is considered by many architectural authorities the third finest in Somersetshire, a county which is remarkably rich both in churches and in especially beautiful towers. The church itself is a fine example of the Perpendicular period.

Few legends of Wessex are prettier or more interesting than that of the famous Glastonbury Thorn, which was considered to be one of the chief marvels of the Holy Site until the reign of Queen Elizabeth, when one of its two enormous trunks was cut down by a Puritan who, the story goes, was only prevented from also destroying the other by one of the blows of his axe falling on his own leg, while a chip of the thorn flying upwards destroyed the sight of one of his eyes. The remaining portion of the tree, which had been so miraculously preserved, survived until the great Civil War, when one of Cromwell's Ironsides, careless of the fate which had befallen the previous Puritan who had sought to destroy the famous thorn, successfully felled it. The spot where it once flourished is now marked by a stone in which are carved the letters I.A.A.D. XXXI., which commemorates both St Joseph and the date of his supposed visit.

The origin of the thorn at Wirral — nowadays known as Weary-all Hill—is stated to have been as

follows. St Joseph and his companions, all weary with their long pilgrimage, on approaching Glastonbury first rested on this spot, and St Joseph, before throwing himself down on the ground to rest, stuck his hawthorn staff in the soft ground. A miracle was at once wrought, for the staff struck root and shot forth branches as the party of missionaries rested. This miraculous thorn, which only put forth leaves and blossoms at Christmas, is, according to botanists, a distinct variety of the common hawthorn, which blossoms twice a year; the winter flowers, which are about the size of a sixpence, appear at Christmas, or sooner if the weather be severe. Although the old tree was destroyed, there are several of the same variety, and supposed to be possessed of equal merit, in the neighbourhood, and they were probably propagated from portions of the original tree.

A curious circumstance in connection with the Glastonbury Thorn is the fact that, when the change of style was made in the calendar in 1752, many people anxiously awaited to see whether the famous thorn would alter its date of blossoming. But, much to the delight of those who believed so implicitly in the marvels of the tree, the thorn came into blossom not on the new Christmas Day, but on January 5, which was the old one.

Glastonbury in the spring is a beautiful spot, famous for its blossoming orchards and many lovely flowers. The country round about is of the most picturesque character, and in the six or seven miles separating

Glastonbury from Wells are many beauty-spots typical of west-country scenery.

The cathedral city of Wells, which lies in a basin at the foot of the beautiful Mendips, whose craggy limestone summits almost encircle it, is interesting from many points of view. It not only presents one of the most interesting examples of a strictly ecclesiastical city in England, but it also possesses a cathedral and other dependent buildings in a very unusual state of preservation and perfection.

Wells owes all its interest and importance nowadays to the religious foundations of which, since the time of King Ina, the West Saxon, it has been the centre. Owing its existence to its religious foundations, it has remained since those ancient times almost undisturbed by the usual vicissitudes of civil or other wars. The town itself never played any important part in the many military struggles which from early times have taken place in Wessex. No citadel or castle overshadowed its ecclesiastical buildings, nor has it at any time been protected, as were most other towns in the Middle Ages, by walls or fortifications. Nor at any period of its existence has it enjoyed any considerable commercial importance ; although at one time, some centuries ago, weaving was one of the staple trades, and an unsuccessful attempt was made to establish silk-mills.

The only events of historical importance connected with the town which are not of a purely ecclesiastical character are the entry into Wells of Henry VII. in 1497, when he marched to the West to suppress the

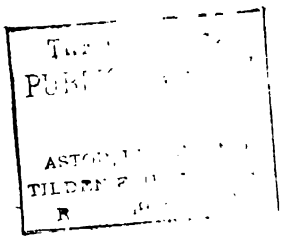
Perkin Warbeck rebellion; and the occupation of the city, two hundred years later, by the Duke of Monmouth and his forces, when retreating from Philips Norton. Macaulay gives a brief pen-picture of the riot and turmoil with which the Duke's untrained soldiery destroyed the city's ancient peace.

He writes: "They tore the lead from the roof of the cathedral to make bullets, and wantonly defaced the ornaments of the building. Grey (Lord) with difficulty preserved the altar from some of the ruffians, who wished to carouse round it, by taking his stand before it with his sword drawn. After the disastrous defeat of the Duke's forces at Sedgemoor many of the rebels were confined at Wells, and were ministered to by the saintly Bishop Ken."

In Wells the interest seems to centre in the cathedral, with its depending buildings, the palace, the deanery, and the vicar's close, whether one be merely a visitor holiday-making in Wessex or a student of architecture or archæology. The town has been spoken of as one of the most beautiful in the world, and certainly, if one is interested in antiquity, and is in sympathy with the atmosphere which seems insensibly to cling to and surround ancient buildings which have survived the ages almost untouched by the fingers of time, the description does not seem exaggerated.

The finest view of the cathedral is probably that from the north-west corner of the Cathedral Green, from which one is able to appreciate the beauty of the west front and the imposing grandeur of the two

THE MARKET-PLACE, WELLS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towers, which are seen across the well-kept lawn bordered with its trees and environed by its deanery on the north and the beautiful chapter-house and chain gate on the east. Although the close is inferior to that of several other cathedrals, it is one of singular charm and beauty, and about its precincts is that peaceful tranquillity into which any discordant sounds of the town itself seldom seem to intrude.

The founder of the first ecclesiastical college of secular canons was King Ina, in 704, and this was endowed by succeeding kings of Wessex with additional privileges, until the religious foundation here established became so important that it was selected by Edward the Elder as the seat of a bishopric. The first bishop was Athelm, formerly Abbot of Glastonbury and afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury in 914.

The see of Wells at first underwent some considerable vicissitudes of fortune, and is said to have been seized by Harold during Edward the Confessor's lifetime, after he had expelled the canons.

At the Conquest, Giso, the fifteenth Bishop, recovered possession of the lands and the see, reinstalled the canons who had been expelled by Harold, and also erected suitable accommodation for them. His immediate successor, John de Villula, transferred the see to Bath, which he purchased of Henry I. for five hundred pounds of silver, with the abbey, which he entirely rebuilt. This transference was caused by the troublous nature of the times and the desire that John de Villula had for safety within town walls,

which, existing at Bath, were, as we have before remarked, never existent at Wells. Soon, however, discord and jealousy seem to have risen between the men of Bath and Wells, and in the time of Bishop Robert (1135–1166) it was determined that the Bishop should in future be elected by the monks of Bath and the canons of Wells jointly, and that the see in future should be known as that of Bath and Wells.

A little later, in the time of Bishop Savaric, another quarrel arose with the monks of Glastonbury, who resented that their abbey should be annexed to the see, which was one of the stipulations made when Savaric was made bishop by Richard Cœur de Lion, in return for kindness shown to him whilst in captivity. The Glastonbury monks appealed to Rome during the episcopate of Bishop Joceline, Savaric's successor, and obtained their release from the undesired union with the see, on condition that they gave up to the bishopric four of the best manors attached to Glastonbury. Joceline was one of the most active and munificent bishops that Wells ever had; and he, after pulling down the Saxon cathedral, which had been allowed to fall into decay, and had been repaired and partly rebuilt by Bishop Robert, erected a much more magnificent church, a very great part of which remains at the present day. Of this Bishop, whose long episcopate of thirty-seven years was remarkable, Fuller says: "God to square his great undertakings giving him a long life to his large heart."

Wells Cathedral

The cathedral is notable for its very rich work of the Early English period, distinguished by local peculiarities, especially in the nave and transepts, which differentiate it from any other building of like date. It also contains in the choir of the Lady Chapel and chapter-house some excellent work of the Early Decorated period.

The Early English west front, with its sculptures, is generally admitted to be quite unrivalled, and has been compared with those of Rheims and Chartres; and, with its varied outlines and slender detached shafts stretching upward tier upon tier, is one of greater interest and impressiveness than that of any other cathedral in England. The number of figures in the exquisite niches of the west front is upwards of six hundred, of which about half are either life-size or colossal; and almost without exception they are of high artistic excellence. Of the larger figures, twenty-one are crowned kings, and eight crowned queens. Also knights, armed knights, princes or nobles, and mitred ecclesiastics. The latter are placed to the south of the central door, and the queens and laymen to the north. Although many of these figures are in a wonderful state of preservation, it is now impossible to satisfactorily identify any; and of only one, that of Edward the Martyr, can the personality be guessed at with any degree of certainty.

This west front, which is contemporary with those of Notre Dame in Paris and Amiens Cathedral, is considered by many to be finer than either, and its

width is considerably greater. The fact that it is built of the fine stone found in the immediate neighbourhood of Wells, which is easily worked and hardens on exposure to the air, will in some measure account, not only for the great number of the statues and the beautiful character of the carving generally, but also for its excellent state of preservation.

To deal with the beauties of Wells Cathedral in detail would occupy a considerable-sized volume of itself. It is only possible here to say that the building is not only wonderfully impressive as a whole, but is marvellously complete in every and the smallest particular, and to generalise regarding some of its most striking or notable features.

Within the beautiful fane, exquisite with elaborate carving and fine stained glass, rest many who have in the past played important parts in the ecclesiastical history of Wessex and the country at large.

Wells is rich in ecclesiastical monuments, which fortunately have been much better preserved than in most other churches in the land. Here lie buried a succession of abbots and bishops, from the eleventh century down almost to the present time, sleeping in the church whose magnificence they loved, and many of them did much to enhance, which nowadays is happily preserved as a lesson in all that is best of the architecture of the periods in which its various parts were constructed.

Scarcely less interesting than the cathedral itself are some of the ecclesiastical buildings attached to it. The

bishop's palace, surrounded by a moat fed from St Andrew's, or what is known as the "Bottomless Well," and by walls and bastions strong enough to sustain a long siege in mediæval times. These latter were the work of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury in the first half of the fourteenth century, the palace having been built a hundred years earlier by Bishop Joceline. Originally it was in the form of a quadrangle, the present building forming the eastern side, whilst the kitchen and offices, which have been almost entirely rebuilt, were on the north side; with a chapel on the south, which was rebuilt at the end of the thirteenth century; and on the west side a garden wall and the gate-house, of which there are now no remains. The present gate-house is plainer fourteenth-century work, and was built by Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury, who embastioned the palace. According to tradition, the latter was fortified, although the town never was so, as a precaution against the monks of Bath, who were said to have sworn to kill the Bishop.

The ruins of the great hall and the restored chapel are very interesting, as is also the habitable part of the palace, which fortunately remains to a great extent as originally built, though in the course of time many minor alterations have been made, including the upper storey with the gabled dormers added to the front by Bishop Bagot in 1840.

Within the palace, among many interesting things, is the beautiful Jacobean staircase leading to the upper floor, on which the principal apartments have always

been situated. The gallery is a fine room nearly a hundred feet long, and lighted by the original Early English windows of two three-foiled lights ; in this handsome room are the portraits of the bishops, including Cardinal Wolsey, down to the last occupant of the see.

The chapel, which is comparatively small, is on the side formerly occupied by the south wing of Joceline's building, and is a beautiful example of Decorated work erected by Bishop Burnell towards the end of the thirteenth century. There is an interesting and low side window in the south wall towards the west end, which tradition asserts was placed there so that lepers or persons suffering from infectious disorders should in a measure be able to take part in the service. The great hall, which is placed at the south-west angle of the chapel, was also the work of Bishop Burnell. It was dismantled in 1552 by Sir John Gates, who, after the execution of the Duke of Somerset, purchased the palace for the sake of the materials. It may be some consolation to the antiquary to know that the vandal Gates was beheaded a year later for plotting to place Lady Jane Grey on the throne. It was in this beautiful hall that the mock trial of Whiting, the last Abbot of Glastonbury, already referred to, had taken place some thirteen years earlier. The ruin of this portion of the palace was completed after the Civil War by one Dr Cornelius Burgess, to whom the building, deanery, and chapter-house, together with much other Church property in the town, had been sold for a nominal price by the Parliament.

THE PALACE, WELLS

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The Deanery

From these ruins it is pleasant to turn to the southern side of the palace enclosure, where lies an exquisite garden rich with flowers, whose bright and varied colours present at all seasons save winter such a pleasing contrast to the grey ruins of the ancient hall and the old-time walls of the houses.

Few more exquisite scenes are to be found in the whole of Wessex than this lovely garden, with its terrace walk along the embattled wall, and its beautiful views of the cathedral and the hills which surround the city. Here is just such a spot as in mediæval days drew to it much that was best, most artistic, and most learned from the greater world without.

Across the Cathedral Green lies the deanery, prominent with its octagonal turrets and embattled parapet, the work of Dean Gunthorne, who filled the offices of chaplain to Edward IV., Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, and several other high positions, from 1472 to 1498. This fine building, although, it is true, a good deal spoiled by modern windows and other alterations, is still a wonderfully well-preserved and almost perfect example of the fifteenth-century nobleman's house. The north or garden front is very beautiful and picturesque, and bears the badges of both Edward IV. and Dean Gunthorne on the bay windows and oriels, the former badge a rose upon a sun, and the latter a gun.

There are many features in this building well worthy of attention, but perhaps the most notable is the hall, which forms so good an example of the transition from

the mediæval hall to the modern dining-room. At the lower end is a remarkable arch of wide span, above which is a small room probably in olden times set aside for the use of musicians; and beneath the arch is the lavatory for washing the hands before dinner.

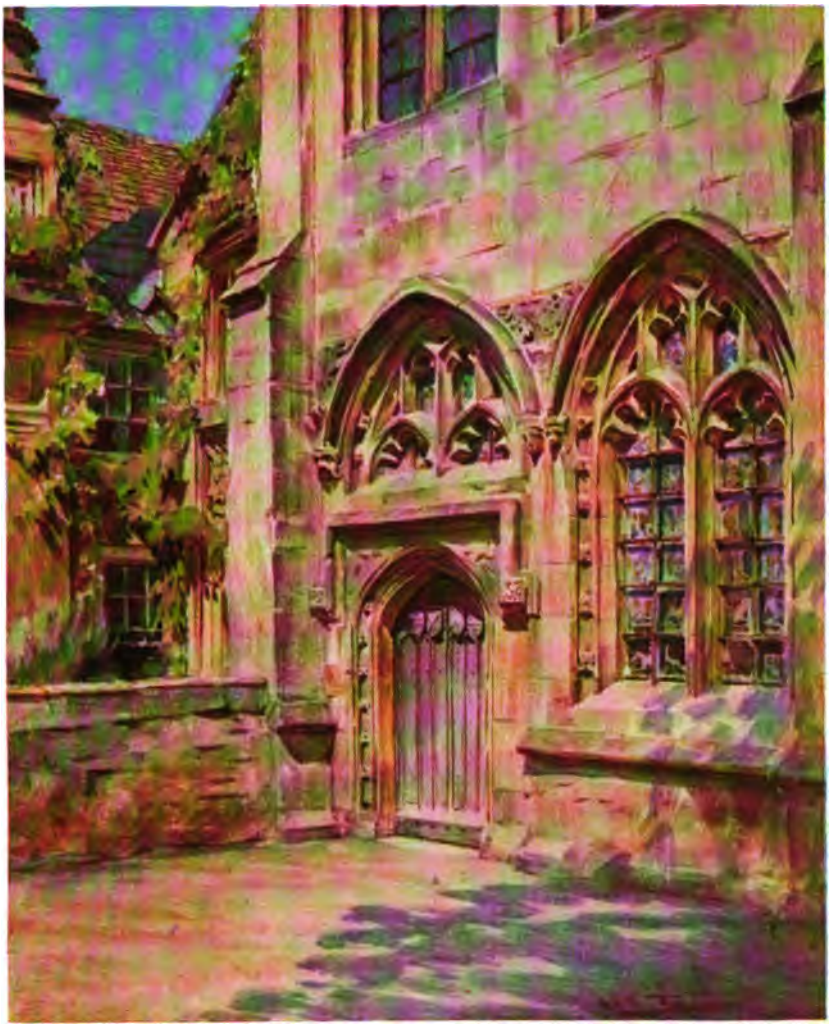
It was at the deanery that Henry VII. was entertained on the last day of September 1499, whilst on his march into the west of England against Perkin Warbeck.

To the eastward of the deanery stands the archdeaconry, a modernised house of about the end of the thirteenth century. The hall is a fine one, and retains a beautiful open timbered roof of the early part of the fifteenth century, which is probably the work of Bishop Bulwith. It was in this building that Polydore Vergil, who was the tool and confidant of Wolsey, is said to have written his history. In the middle of the sixteenth century he went to reside abroad, after having held the archdeaconry for a period of more than forty years; it was then that he alienated the house, which from that time has continued severed from the church.

The vicars' close on the north-eastern side of the cathedral is a long, narrow court of great picturesqueness, possessing a chapel and library at the northern end, and an entrance gate with a common hall above it at the south end, with twenty-one houses ranged along the two sides. The houses, although they have been modernised, are probably substantially the work of Bishop Ralph of Shrewsbury, erected in the last years of the first half of the fourteenth century. On the

THE VICARS' CLOSE, WELLS

Life's Little Ironies, "Tragedy of Two Ambitions" (lodgings of Halborough)



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mantelpiece of the hall, over the gateway, is carved an inscription asking for the prayers of the faithful for Richard Pomeroy, who built the eastern end. This close was, in fact, a college, each member of which had a small house of two rooms one over the other, with a staircase and small chamber at the back, instead of rooms on a common staircase. One of those dwellings was restored to its original state by J. H. Parker of Oxford, who also completely repaired and decorated one of the houses of the two principal canons, situated on the north-western end of the wall, which had formerly been used as a brew-house, and had been allowed to fall into almost complete dilapidation. Both of these houses are not only interesting to the student, but must be so to all who would in any way realise the life and the architecture of mediæval times. Unfortunately, most of the canons' houses have been either rebuilt or very much spoiled by modern alterations. But one or two still retain some of their fifteenth-century work and features.

The singing-school, which is situated over part of the west wall of the cloisters and joins the corner of the cathedral, was probably built by Bishop Ralph de Salopia, and altered by Bishop Harewell. It is unfortunate that it has been greatly spoiled by alterations and additions.

In the town itself are a number of interesting houses which still bear distinct traces of mediæval character, though greatly modernised. Unfortunately, the present town hall, which took the place in 1779 of the quaint

building which stood on pillars in the centre of the square, and was erected in the middle of the sixteenth century by Bishop Knight and Dean Woolman, is ugly and entirely out of keeping with its surroundings. It remains for some munificent native of Wells to erect a building in harmony with the mediæval atmosphere of the market-place, and do away with one which is only an eyesore.

Of the non-ecclesiastical buildings, few have greater interest than the old Crown Inn on the south side of the market-place. The portion overlooking the yard is very interesting and quaint; and it was from the window of this inn that the famous William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, once preached.

St Cuthbert's Church is a singularly beautiful building, originally in the Early English style. It was apparently erected about 1240, and was of cruciform type, with a central tower, which is recorded as having fallen about the middle of the sixteenth century. The original building was transformed after the erection of the west tower during the Perpendicular period. The church as it now stands possesses a very beautiful tower, nave, and aisles, with chantry chapel on both sides, transeptal chapels, north and south porches, each with parvis over it, a chancel with aisles and the original sacristy to the north. The tower is famous throughout the west country as second only in beauty to that of Wrington.

A chantry was founded by Thomas Tanner of Wells in the second year of the fifteenth century; against the

eastern wall was an altar, now very much defaced, with reredos, erected in 1470. During the Reformation the statues were torn down or built up in the niches, and the whole work hidden under a coat of plaster, in which state the reredos remained until it was again brought to light in 1848. It was at the same time that the reredos of St Mary's Chapel was discovered, which is a very fine one, and the whole work of extreme beauty and delicacy. A fresco of our Lord in the act of benediction was also uncovered about the same time. The church has been well restored, and forms one of the great attractions of Wells.

Quite close to St Cuthbert's is Bishop Bubwith's Almshouse, instituted after the Bishop's death in 1424. Unfortunately, ill-conceived alterations were made in the middle of the last century, which did much to destroy the original mediæval plan. This consisted of a large hall with cells on each side for the almsmen, left open to the timbered roof, and a chapel at the eastern end open to the hall, so that the inmates might join in the daily services without leaving their cells. Although so unwisely restored, the Almshouse is of great interest.

In this city of the West it is more possible than perhaps in any other in England to realise the mediæval atmosphere which once pervaded it, and to understand something of the life and architecture of those times.

A great writer has said: "In Wells one finds not only exquisite ecclesiastical architecture unusually well preserved, but also a strange survival in the quietude

of the life of the city of those days which are passed never to come again. . . . In Wells there is also much domestic architecture which still preserves a good deal of its mediæval character, forming an interesting object-lesson not only for the student, but to any to whom the past is of interest and a matter for reverence."

CHAPTER VII

THE CAPITAL OF SOUTH WESSEX, ITS HISTORY AND ROMANCE

Of all Wessex towns which, important in early ages, have still retained the proud position to which history has entitled them, none is more interesting than Dorchester, which may truly be called the capital of Wessex. Set almost in the heart of Dorset itself, and surrounded by fertile meadows to the north and west and east, and by gradually rising uplands which slope to the coast on its southern side, it is both picturesquely and well situated. And it is probably not a little owing to the fact that through it passes one of the old Roman roads, which was historically renowned in the days of antiquity, that the town has preserved much of its interest and importance to the present time.

Dorchester of to-day is a thriving country town, rather sleepy except on market days, when it takes on an air of bustle and becomes full of types of Wessex life and character. Once the home of Roman nobles and the camp of Roman soldiery, it is now chiefly of interest on account of its old traditions, some few ancient buildings, and its position as the county town

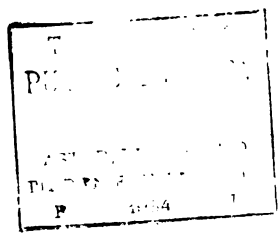
in a wide and prosperous sheep-breeding and dairy country. Prettily situated on a hill sloping on the north side to the valley of the picturesque Frome, and stretching out on the south and west sides to the open country, which is intersected by ancient roads still used as highways, it has much of moment in its past, and into the latter are woven strands of much complex history of strangely different ages. Known alike to Saxons, Romans, and Danes; occupied in turn by all these; the scene of fierce battles and of more than one siege,—it remains rich in memories of the past, and survives a good example of the Wessex town of to-day.

Almost on all sides are relics of the times when Durnovaria, as it was called by the Romans, formed a centre from which the civilising influence of the conquerors radiated. Beneath its streets are pavements along which the legions marched in triumph, or when bent on further conquest of the surrounding country, or bound for the amphitheatre hard by, in which the gladiatorial combats organised for the amusement and distraction of the conquerors and conquered alike were to be held.

Each old house as it is pulled down perchance may disclose the foundations and pavements of other houses trodden by the feet of those world-conquerors of more than fifteen hundred years ago; whilst in the fields which surround the town and stretch towards the coast on the one side and the valley of the Frome on the other are constantly found treasures of pottery and ornaments, linking the Dorchester of to-day with that

FORDINGTON, DORCHESTER

Back of Mixen Lane in *The Mayor of Casterbridge*



wonderful era of Durnovaria of the past. Not only are treasures unearthed which have outlasted their aforetime users and owners, but also the eloquent remains of patrician and soldier, Roman dame and Romano-British maiden—bones which once were enshrouded by the flesh of Rome's mightiest and fairest. And in the streets and gardens of this ancient town the present-day inhabitants doubtless walk upon the resting-places of many who in those dark ages had a part in the making of Wessex history.

The position of Durnovaria in itself was one of great importance; from it ran the Via Iceniana or Icening or Icknield Street, and this and the Fosse Way in the neighbourhood brought many through it in the Roman times.

Anciently encompassed by a high and stout wall of stone, some fragmentary remains of which are still to be found in the west, south, and east quarters of the town, it has also exterior ramparts which are still visible on the same sides. The old town was, of course, on a lower level, and hence it is that even nowadays discoveries of fibulæ and other ornaments are frequently made.

Of Dorchester during the age of the ancient Britons, although there seems little doubt that a settlement existed here, we have scarcely any record save the name only; but in Roman times it had undoubtedly risen to a place of considerable importance. Ptolemy refers to it as the chief town of the Durotriges, and in the writings of Antoninus and Richard of Cirencester a

distinct mention of it being a Roman station is recorded.

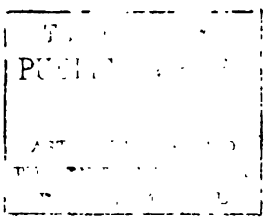
The history of Dorchester in olden times is still to be traced in some of the names of the streets and portions of the town—Durn or Durngate Street, the Icen Way, Friary Lane, Shire Hall Lane, Bullstake, and Bowling Alley Walk, amongst others.

In the Saxon age, after the Romans had departed, leaving behind them but a few colonists attached to the town and district either by domestic or by commercial ties, it was a place of considerable importance. And although the Saxon annals do not contain much mention of it, under King Athelstan it must have reached a high position amongst Wessex towns, by reason of the fact that it was given two mints—a privilege granted as a rule only to cities and walled towns of size and note. Coins of Ethelred II., of the great Canute, and of Edward the Confessor, all bearing the mark of this mint, still exist.

During the heroic, but until Alfred's day seldom successful, struggles of the Saxons against the Danish invaders the town suffered much ; and it is recorded that Sweyn, king of Denmark, having landed in Cornwall A.D. 1003, proceeded eastward to ravage the country lying along Icening Street, and, reaching Dorchester, took and burnt it, throwing down the walls, which had offered so stout a resistance, in revenge for the massacre of the Danes perpetrated by King Ethelred in the previous year.

Although Dorchester was soon rebuilt, and remained

THE FROME ABOVE DORCHESTER (CASTERBRIDGE)



the capital of the county and also a place of considerable importance in the south-west of England, its history is without incident of more than local importance for many years after the visit of the fierce Danish leader, and its annals from that time onward until the reign of Elizabeth are peaceful rather than stirring. However, during a period from 1201 to 1214 King John paid many visits to the town for the purpose of hunting in the neighbourhood.

The period of the dissolution of the monasteries, several famous foundations being within a short day's journey of the town, must have been a troublous time in the district, and Dorchester, where a Franciscan priory had been founded in 1364, doubtless saw and knew something of the visits of Henry VIII.'s troopers, and even possibly of Thomas Cromwell himself, the King's right-hand man in the work of spoliation, when they were engaged in the suppression of the neighbouring monastic foundations of Bindon, Ford, Sherborne, and others in the county.

In the opening years of Queen Elizabeth's reign Dorchester was the scene of several martyrdoms, brought about by the change of religion and the several penal statutes which had been enacted against the Roman Catholics. The first to suffer was one Thomas Pilchard, a priest of Sussex, who was hanged, drawn, and quartered at Dorchester in the year 1587. A few years after, William Pikes, a layman, was apprehended and condemned for high treason in being reconciled to the Church of Rome, and denying Elizabeth's

spiritual supremacy. And still later a record is found of the execution of four persons on the same day, July 4, 1594—John Cornelius, alias Mohun, Thomas Bosgrave, Terence Carey, and Patrick Salmon, servants in the house of the widow of Sir John Arundel. The priest Cornelius appears to have been taken whilst staying at Chideock House, near Bridport, then inhabited by Sir John Arundel's widow. An interesting side-light is thown upon these executions by the fact that some time after the event the townsmen of Dorchester requested the sheriff to have the head of Cornelius removed from the gallows, to which it had been nailed, stating that they had suffered great loss in the matter of harvests by the tempests which had arisen, as had happened at other times on like occasions.

The very next year the town was visited by the plague, in consequence, it was alleged by the Catholics, of the wrath of Heaven at the execution of Cornelius and his co-religionists.

On Friday, August 6, 1613, a great fire devastated the town, and very few of the houses in the old portion escaped, and both the churches of Holy Trinity and All Saints were destroyed. The loss was very heavy, and most people were not only rendered homeless, but ruined. It is recorded that a collection was made for the sufferers all over the country, and that "one, Matthew Chubb, did advance and lay out one thousand pounds to those who had sustained loss, which was to be repaid by the King the next subsidy following."

ATHELHAMPTON AISLE IN PUDDLETOWN CHURCH,
NEAR DORCHESTER

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The Burning of Dorchester

Barely ten years passed ere Dorchester was again devastated by fire, and many of the houses were once more destroyed. A curious memorandum made at the time of these two great fires throws a vivid side-light on the attitude with which many men regarded these visitations. We are told that "before the great fire of 1613 little or no money was given to any charity uses for a long season. Many lay frozen in these dregs until it pleased God to waken them in this fiery trial in burning of their stubble and dross; but when they saw that by this sudden blast such great buildings turned into heaps of stones, into dust and ashes, even in a moment; and being thus seasonably admonished to set our hearts upon the true treasure that shall not perish, and thereby open unto us the fading quality of all these things how little they profit us in time of need; and withal beholding the great miseries of many families they were in an instant harbourless; many men's bowels began to yearn in compassion towards them, studying how to do some good work for the relief of the poor, as also to sanctifying the remainder of their estate to the Lord."

The result of which heart-searching and seeing the hand of God in these fiery afflictions was the setting up of the hospital or workhouse, together with the house of correction, and, rather quaintly, a brew-house on the same plot of land, the profit arising from which it was decided to devote to the maintenance of the hospital.

The breaking of the storm of the Great Rebellion

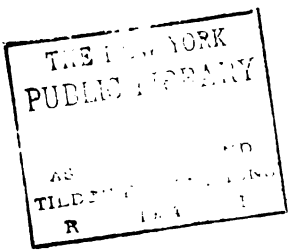
saw the town, according to Lord Clarendon, one of the most strongly disaffected places to the King's cause in the whole of England. And he further goes on to state that it was a considerable place and the seat of a great malignity.

Although the town was not a place strong by nature, nor capable of being made so, the defect was supplied by the spirit and the obstinacy of the inhabitants, and it was early fortified against the King by some of the leaders of the Parliamentary faction. A minute of the corporation shows that in January 1642 "it is agreed that the townsmen of this borough doe raise or contynue a convenient number of souldhiers armed for the defence of this towne to be in weeklie paie, and the number is agreed to bee 160 at least besides officers." The minutes of the corporation of this time contain many other interesting items showing not only the temper of the townsfolk, but also the nature of the preparations they made to resist attack by the Royalist forces.

On the approach of the Earl of Caernarvon in the following year, after his successful attack upon Bristol, and that of Prince Maurice, it was decided by the townsfolk to be impossible to defend the place, and they sent commissioners to treat with the Earl. On obtaining the terms that they should not be plundered nor suffer any ill for what they had done, they delivered up the place, with all their arms and ammunition and ordnance. It would appear that the town lay at the mercy of both parties during the ensuing weeks, and,

THE MILL AND CHURCH AT AFFPUDDLE, NEAR DORCHESTER

The "East Egdon Church" where Yeobright and Eustacia were married in *The Return of the Native*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after being the centre and pivot of some skirmishing, on July 15 of the following year the Earl of Essex took possession of the town for the Parliament, after an unsuccessful attempt to do this on the part of Lord Inchiquin, who had come with a party of 240 horse and foot from Wareham for that purpose.

Cromwell himself was at Dorchester in March 1645 with a large force, amounting to some four thousand in all, and a battle took place outside the town between some of the Parliamentary horse and the troops of General Goring, who, taking Cromwell's men in the rear as well as in the front, compelled them to retire from the river into the town.

From this time onward, Dorchester, in the reigns of Elizabeth, Charles I., and James I. noted far and wide for its cloth manufacture, went on its quiet, undisturbed way, until the unfortunate attempt of the Duke of Monmouth involved the townsfolk and persons from round about in the atrocious travesties of justice enacted by the infamous Judge Jeffreys throughout the length and breadth of Wessex.

On Thursday, September 3, 1685, before Judge Jeffreys and four other judges, the "Bloody Assize" was opened. More than three hundred persons were down for trial, and a sinister meaning was held to exist by many in the order made by Jeffreys for the Court to be hung with scarlet cloth. The unfortunate persons, many of them guiltless of anything more treasonable than mere sympathy with the cause of Monmouth, were gathered from far and near, and thrown into

Dorchester Gaol — some from as far north-east as Salisbury, and others from as far east as Winchester.

On the day after his arrival for the assize, Jeffreys, whose lodging is still pointed out in High West Street, nearly opposite the County Museum—from the windows of which in those days it was possible to see the gaol and even watch executions—attended church when a sermon was preached, at which, as it inculcated mercy, the Chief Justice was seen to laugh. On the following day, thirty persons, who "had put themselves on their country," after being threatened and browbeaten by the infamous judge, were, with one exception, found guilty and condemned to death, and were executed two days later. Then, to shorten the proceedings, Jeffreys adopted a ruse by which two officers visited the prisoners in gaol, with a promise of mercy if they confessed to their supposed crimes. Many did this, but found to their cost that it was merely a device of the brutal Chief Justice to enable him to deal expeditiously with the cases. In this way he sentenced 292 to death, of whom thirteen were afterwards executed. A few persons, by application to Jeffreys' favourites, were able to purchase their freedom, paying huge sums for the clemency granted. Some of those, however, that Jeffreys reprieved from a death-sentence had little cause—such was the almost incredible cruelty of the Chief Justice—to bless his leniency. Several were condemned to be whipped through every town in the county once a year, and, in addition, to suffer long terms of imprisonment and heavy fines.

WOODLANDS NEAR MERE, WILTS

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
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One William Wiseman, of Weymouth, was ordered to be whipped at all the market towns of Dorset, but the sentence appears to have been carried out only at Dorchester and Weymouth.

From the time of the "Bloody Assize," history, in its widest sense, has little to do with Dorchester, and the next event of any moment after Jeffreys' visit is another fire which took place in 1725, and burnt a large portion of the town to the ground. This was followed exactly fifty years later by yet another great fire, which would probably have destroyed the larger portion of the town, had it not been for the splendid efforts of the soldiery belonging to Sir John Cope's regiment of dragoons, then quartered in the town.

Dorchester, although some distance inland, felt much of the excitement attendant upon the threatened invasion of England by Napoleon in the early years of the last century ; and it can well be imagined that the coming and going of troops bound for Weymouth and the downs to the north-east of that town proved a welcome break in the monotony of life, and that the scenes of enthusiasm which marked the movements of troops and calling out of the militia throughout the west country found a strenuous echo in the town and neighbourhood.

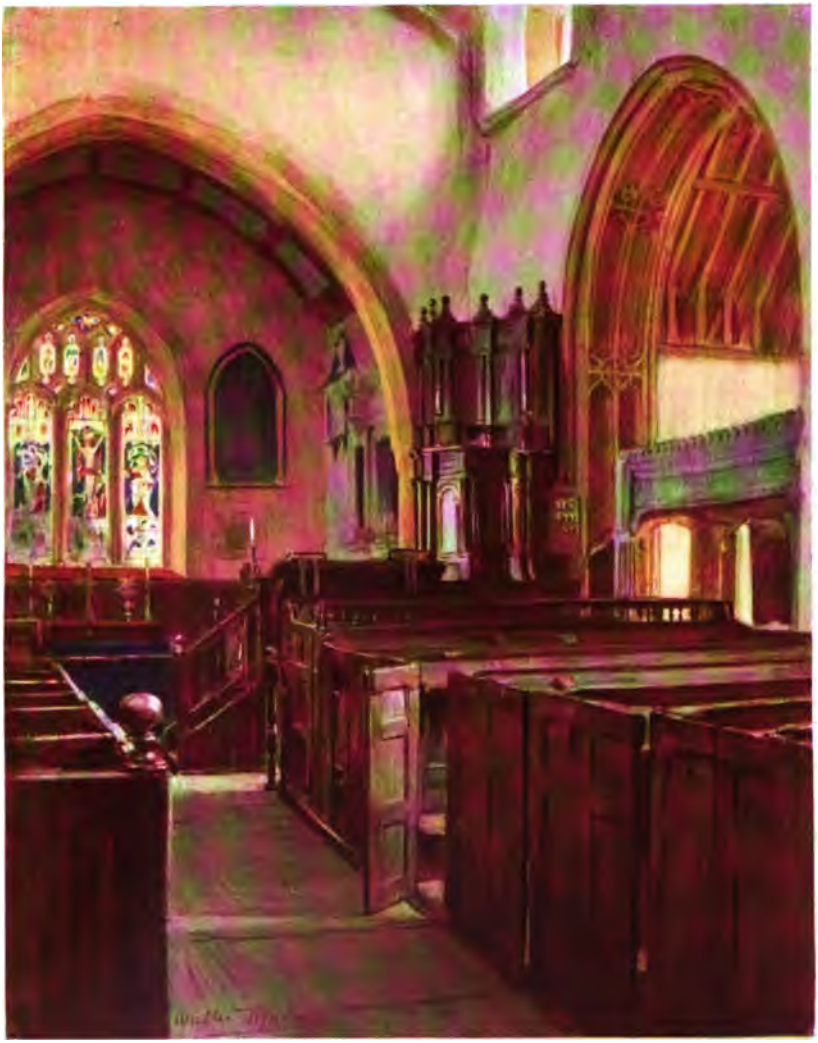
The presence of King George III. and his daughters at the neighbouring borough of Weymouth about the same time proved another source of distraction to Dorchester folk, who flocked towards the seaport in great numbers, giving a bustle and gaiety to the roads

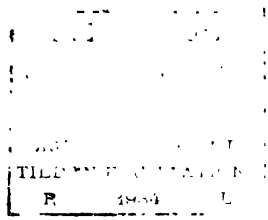
to which they had never before been accustomed—"journeying thither," as we are told, "that they might catch a sight of His Majesty the King, either walking or driving in the streets of the town, or a distant view of him bathing from the royal machine in the waters of the bay."

Among the several interesting customs connected with Dorchester and its immediate neighbourhood was the ancient system of tenure by which land on the Manor of Fordington was held from the Duchy of Cornwall up to the year 1842, when the authorities of the Duchy refused any longer to entertain the applications from the copyholders for renewing of lives. By the custom referred to, each copyholder held his land on three lives, and when the death of one of them occurred, it was the practice to go to the next manor and ask permission to insert another person's name. Usually this request was granted on payment of a fine, varying in amount according to the size of the holding. This system of tenure has been referred to by Mr Thomas Hardy in his incomparable pictures of Wessex life and Wessex customs, and so long as it lasted the system proved a link connecting the Dorchester and Fordington of to-day with those of feudal and mediæval times.

In the olden days, when a public execution at the gaol might be looked for to occasionally provide excitement for the inhabitants, it used to be the custom for many to journey townwards from the country round for no other purpose than to see the unhappy criminal

PUDDLETOWN CHURCH





executed. In connection with these public executions, and as showing how general it was for all classes to regard the event with interest, and even as a sort of entertainment, the following anecdote may be quoted.

When a boy, Thomas Hardy—afterwards destined to become one of Dorchester's most distinguished inhabitants—used to come into the town to school, and at an assize of this date a woman was tried for the murder of her husband at a village near. The husband was a dissipated scoundrel, who treated her cruelly and abominably. She was from all accounts a good-looking and kindly woman ; but one day, discovering her husband, who was unfaithful to her, under circumstances of grave suspicion, her anger was so aroused that she stabbed him fatally. After trial and conviction, she was condemned to death, and young Hardy, with a companion, witnessed the execution from the branches of a tree overlooking the gaol-front, on which the gallows was placed.

The two boys appear to have scarcely realised that what they were witnessing was hard and terrible fact, and it was not until the drop fell with a thud, and his companion, who was on another branch of the tree, fell fainting to the ground, that young Hardy was at last brought to a complete realisation of the horror of the scene he had witnessed. This event probably haunted the imagination of the future novelist for many a long day, and it is not unlikely that it proved the germ for much of the tragedy of the latter part of his most famous book, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles.*

Note.—The above story, though traditional, may possibly be largely fictitious.

Although Dorchester of the present day is one of the most prettily situated and cleanly towns in Wessex, and a less sleepy place than in the latter years of the first half of the last century, it has still preserved much of its ancient character, both as regards its buildings and the types of those who come in from the country-side for business or pleasure.

The town on market days is well worth a visit from the curious, and the student of types such as those with which Mr Thomas Hardy has peopled the pages of his novels and verses—pedlars and dealers from far and wide: the former, many of them, have trudged along the highways of Wessex from fair to fair, and the latter are mostly stout farmers, begaitered and red of face. Butchers and meat contractors from even so far afield as Southampton, Bristol, Exeter, and London jostle amongst the crowds who have come, some to see the "fat beasts," or their friends, and others out of idlest curiosity. Whilst carters, with a whip-lash threaded through their hat-bands as a badge of their calling, wander somewhat aimlessly in and out the throng, pausing to chat and listen to other people's gossip; and here and there shepherds and farm labourers patiently wait, with stolid countenance and lack-interest eyes, to be hired for the ensuing year.

But Dorchester, even when free from fairs and markets, is an interesting and picturesque place, with three main streets, much as they were three hundred years ago, one running south and north to the point

near the church, where it branches T-wise into the other two, east and west.

The chief building of interest is undoubtedly St Peter's Church, which stands on the north side of the High Street, with the County Museum on one hand and the Town Hall on the other. It consists of a chancel, body, and two aisles extending equally with the former, and a fine tower some 90 feet in height. The northern aisle is plain, with its eastern end raised considerably higher than the rest, and embattled. It was either built or rebuilt by some of the family of Williams, of Herringston, whose vaults are there. The south aisle is embattled, with its eastern end also raised; it is of very fine architecture, much of it being fifteenth-century work. The south door in the porch presents a curious example of Transition-Norman, the arch being pointed and richly ornamented with mouldings of purely Norman character; the jambs are chamfered, and the rich mouldings are stopped by small carved brackets of Early English character.

The church was considerably restored in 1857, when, unfortunately, several of the very interesting cross-legged effigies were much damaged. It is supposed that they represented members of the Chideock family removed at some time, probably at the dissolution of the monasteries, from the priory hard by. There is also a curious and grotesque effigy to the famous Denzil Holles, who was one of the members of the House of Commons who held the Speaker Finch down in his chair till Parliament had passed its famous

Resolutions in 1639. Holles was also one of the "Five Members" in 1642, and the impeacher of Archbishop Laud. A very old and interesting brass is that of Johanna de St Omero, the widow of Robert More, who died in 1436. There is also a fine Jacobean pulpit, and a monument to Thomas Hardy, founder of the Grammar School; and the rood staircase is well worth attention.

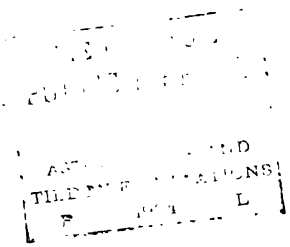
Outside is an excellent statue of the Rev. William Barnes, the author of *Rural Poems in the Dorset Dialect.* He was born in the first year of the last century, in the beautiful Blackmore Vale, which Mr Hardy has so eloquently described in several of his novels, and which became "the abiding-place of the people whose daily doings, sayings, and emotions have been crystallised in the poet's efforts." Indeed, those who would understand the life of Wessex, the dialect, and the point of view of Wessex characters could not do better than take up the poems of Barnes and devote to them a few hours of study.

Of the other churches of the town, once eleven in number, and now only three, little need be said. All Saints, in High East Street, is an elegant building with a lofty spire erected in the first half of the last century. The church owes its existence chiefly to Mr Troyte, much of the work being done with his own hands. The west window was erected in "loving memory" of him shortly after his death in 1857. Under the tower is an interesting altar-tomb, from the old church, of Matthew Chubb, who died in 1625.

Trinity Church, in High West Street, is a modern

COTTAGE AT TINCLETON, NEAR DORCHESTER

The home of Caroline Aspent of "The Fiddler of the Reels" in *Life's Little Ironies*



Gothic structure needing no very particular attention or description. It was rebuilt in 1824.

Fordington Church, which lies just outside of Dorchester, was originally in the Transition-Norman style and of cruciform plan, but unfortunately it has been badly restored and mutilated. It is nevertheless interesting from the fact of its preserving several features of great interest to architectural students and archæologists. The tower is a good example of the Somersetshire type. A very interesting flat bas-relief representing a vision of St George (to whom the church is dedicated) is still to be seen in the tympanum of the south door, near by which is also a holy-water stoup of a very unusual form. The stone pulpit bears the date 1592, and is worth study.

One scarcely looks for much of interest in such a building as the County Gaol, but that of Dorchester, built on the site of the old castle, on the rising ground to the north side of the town, contains a unique feature in the tessellated pavement of the chapel, which is a relaid Roman one some twenty feet square, discovered with other antiquities in 1858, whilst a grave was being dug for a murderer.

Of the ancient priory little more than the name remains, although it was undoubtedly once one of the most important foundations of the Franciscan Order in the county.

Dorchester of to-day possesses few buildings of note, although several of interest; nor, when one remembers the terrible fires by which the town at

various periods has been devastated, is this fact to be wondered at.

The County Hall, in High West Street, is an unpretentious building erected at the time when the Young Pretender was troubling the government and even somewhat disturbing the peace of Wessex by his march into England in his unsuccessful attempt to wrest the crown from George III.

The Town Hall, which stands close to St Peter's Church, is chiefly to be noted from the fact that it possesses an effective open timbered roof, and the chair stated to have been occupied by Judge Jeffreys when at Dorchester at the "Bloody Assize."

The County Museum, on the other side of the same church, is rich, not only in a fine archæological collection of British and Roman antiquities found during various excavations in Dorchester and neighbourhood, but also in a good collection of local fossils from the beds of Purbeck and Kimmeridge.

There are some interesting old almshouses built and founded respectively by Matthew Chubb, who was M.P. for Dorchester in the first year of James I.'s reign, and Margaret Chubb, his wife; and others founded by John Wetstone, who in 1614 gave to the town by will £500 for the purpose.

Napper's Mite, or Napper's Almshouse, situated on the eastern side of South Street, was founded in 1615, for the purpose of accommodating ten poor men, by Sir Robert Napper (Napier) of Middlemarch. In connection with this last-named charity, Sir Gerard

Napper, knight and baronet, by his will, dated November 12, 1667, left all his Manor of Stert, in the parish of Babcary, in the county of Somerset, for the purpose of providing a divine service once a day to his alms-people in Dorchester, and for catechising them once a week; £5 to either the schoolmaster of Dorchester for the time being or his usher, and, after the payment of the said £5, to set apart so much of the rents and profits of the said manor as, together with the yearly profits of the chambers of his almshouse, would make and provide convenient gowns for the alms-people in the said almshouse once in two years. The remainder of the profits of the said manor were to be equally divided amongst alms-people.

But if nowadays deficient in buildings of great interest, Dorchester can boast not only of pure air and picturesque surroundings, but also of being within easy reach of a Roman amphitheatre, and a British or Roman camp of the greatest archæological interest.

The first, also known as Maumbury Rings, is situated about a quarter of a mile to the south of the town, hard by the London and South-Western railway station. The famous architect of St Paul's Cathedral, Sir Christopher Wren—at that time M.P. for Weymouth,—was the first to call public attention to Maumbury. Authorities differ as to whether its origin was British or Roman, but several of the most learned have given it as their opinion that it is the work of Romans about the time of Agricola. The opponents of this view chiefly base

their opposition on the fact that, although Maumbury is very different from the usual Roman amphitheatres, many remains of which are still existent in Italy, it resembles very closely the early British "rounds," of which Piran Round, in Cornwall, about a mile and a half from Perranporth, is a fine example.

Maumbury is oval in form, and is constructed in a series of raised mounds partly enclosing an open space; in area it is some 218 feet in length by 163 feet in width. The rampart rises from the ends towards the centre, where it attains its greatest height (about 30 feet) and breadth. It is one of the most perfect relics of the kind in Britain, and it is calculated that its seating capacity was sufficient for from twelve to thirteen thousand spectators. By some it is supposed that in Roman days under the thickest parts of the sides were the dens for the wild beasts, from which they were released for service in the arena. For many years, long after it had become grass-grown and rounded in form, it was used as the place of public execution; and as recently as March 21, 1705, Mary Channing, who was at the summer assizes in the previous year tried for poisoning her husband, whom by her extravagance she had previously almost ruined, was strangled and afterwards burned in the arena in the presence of an immense throng of upwards of ten thousand people. Its use as a place of public execution was discontinued in 1767.

From the western side of the rampart, a few hundred yards away is Poundbury, situated on the

FROM THE DEAN'S ORCHARD, MERE, WILTS

summit of a hill rising from the river Frome. Popularly it is supposed to have been constructed by the Danes at the siege of Dorchester by Sweyn ; but the Rev. C. W. Bingham and other authorities incline to the view that it is either British-Roman or Roman work. It is a strongly constructed entrenchment protected by a lofty vallum and ditch, which are double on the western side ; on the northern side the natural steepness of the hill appears to have been considered a sufficiently effective defence.

Two miles south of Dorchester, a little to the right of the Weymouth road, lies Mai-Dun, "the hill of strength," now known as Maiden Castle. This magnificent British earthwork, the most extensive in existence, enclosing within its inner area some forty-five acres, and covering altogether considerably more than one hundred acres, was formerly a hill-fort of the Durotriges, and is probably the Dunium of Ptolemy.

It is situated on the flat summit of a natural hill, and has been entrenched and fortified ; it extends about a thousand yards from east to west, and five hundred from north to south, and the whole is surrounded, in some places with two, and in others with three ramparts nearly sixty feet high and of great steepness. There would appear originally to have been four entrances, defended by the overlapping ends of the earthworks, and still further strengthened by outworks. Even to-day there are traces of a tank or reservoir in which to catch and retain water.

From this fine relic of almost prehistoric industry the view is a magnificent one, and even those who visit Maiden Castle with no great knowledge of its meaning or historical interest can scarcely fail to be impressed by the splendid prospect which will unfold itself to their eyes.

CASTLE COMBE, NORTH WILTS

CHAPTER VIII

THE STORY OF A FAMOUS WESSEX STRONGHOLD

Some five miles south-east of Wareham lies Corfe Castle, nowadays a small collection of grey-stoned houses which gives no indication of the important part that the place once played in the history of south-eastern Wessex. Indeed, Corfe is nowadays but another of those decayed and still decaying townlets which lie scattered so thickly in different parts of Wessex.

The road from Wareham, which first traverses the wide stretches of Stoborough Heath, then climbs upward along the side of the Purbeck Hills, until an extensive panorama of beautiful harbour and heathland scenery is disclosed. Few roads in Wessex provide prettier scenery of the panoramic type than does this from Wareham to Corfe Castle, with impressive and lofty downs to the right, and the beautiful creeks and reaches of Poole Harbour and the Wareham Channel spread out on the left. Along this road, full of historic memories—not the least tragic of which is that of the hapless, half-dead King, Edward the Marytr, who, according to the chroniclers, was dragged along it

by his frightened steed after he had been treacherously stabbed by command of his step-mother Elfrida,—one journeys surrounded by typical Wessex scenery, at last coming upon the ancient castle suddenly and impressively. Indeed, those who travel from Wareham by train will lose half the effect of the first impression that the noble and imposing ruin makes upon those who approach by road.

To the right of the mound upon which the castle stands is the famous Creech Barrow, towering above the other heights, and crowned by a few fragmentary remains of an ancient hunting-lodge of the now almost vanished Purbeck Forest. From the summit of this hill there is a panoramic view of beauty and extent almost unequalled in Wessex. Below lies a wide stretch of moor, in spring and summer ablaze with golden gorse, and in autumn purple and ruddy with heather and bracken, broken here and there by tiny, shimmering pools, which stretches in almost an unbroken line for a distance of eight or nine miles. In the middle distance are the silvery reaches of Poole Harbour, and the equally beautiful prospect of the Wareham Channel, with Branksea Island set amidst the waters like a chrysolite or an emerald, according to the light which falls upon it, and the season of the year.

Further to the south rise the wooded heights of Parkstone, girdled by a sandy shore ; and still further to the right is the commencement of the wide, sickle-shaped bay, in the centre of which lies modern but still beautiful Bournemouth.

Anglo-Saxon Corfe

Above Poole, which lies a blue-grey smoky patch in the distance, rises a swelling background stretching away to Salisbury Plain, which on fine days can be faintly seen on the far horizon. On the other side of the ridge of Creech Barrow, the houses of Swanage can be seen in the distance, nestling beneath the broken-looking, quarried hills and rounded downs.

Below the south-eastern end of this great hill lies the wonderful ruined pile of Corfe Castle, which derives its name from the Anglo-Saxon *ceorfan* (to cut); and its original name, Corve's Gate, refers not to the gate of the castle, but to the extraordinary cleft in the line of steep chalk hills in the centre of which, on an elevated mound, the ruined castle stands.

Although some building may have been here of more ancient date than the reign of Edward the Martyr, his murder (A.D. 978), which, as the Anglo-Saxon chroniclers say, was "the foulest deed which was ever committed by the English since they came to Britain," is the earliest mention of the castle. It would appear doubtful whether any portion of the building, the ruins of which now remain, was standing at the time of Elfrida's crime, and most authorities seem to favour the idea that it was at a hunting-lodge standing on the site of the later stronghold that the dastardly crime was committed.

The old story, preserved in an ancient ballad, tells how Edward, then only in his nineteenth year, returning from a hunt in the neighbouring forest of Purbeck, and having lost his attendants, came to his stepmother's

lodge to obtain rest and refreshment. Elfrida, who was anxious that her own son should succeed to the throne, seized the opportunity to herself stab her unfortunate stepson as he drank a horn of wine at her door. Then, according to the story, his horse, becoming alarmed, dashed away at a gallop, and the unfortunate King, falling from his saddle, was dragged several miles hanging from his stirrup, to a spot where he was ultimately found by Elfrida's retainers, dead and mutilated.

The unfortunate young King's body, after discovery, was at first, by the Queen's order, hidden in a peasant's hut close at hand; and on this spot a church was afterwards built. Then it was concealed in a marsh near by, and, according to several authorities, was first entombed at Wareham, whence the body was ultimately removed with great pomp to Shaftesbury. Elfrida, however, did not profit by her crime, for we are told that she was haunted by the shadow of her victim, and eventually died conscience-stricken at Wherwell Abbey, which she had founded, as well as that at Ambresbury, in expiation of her crime.

It is very generally supposed that the original Saxon castle or hunting-lodge—whichever it may have been —was destroyed by the Danes during one of their frequent forays, and possibly at the time of their first attack upon Wareham. It was not rebuilt until the period of the Norman Conquest, and there is no mention of the castle in the Domesday Book.

In the reign of Henry II., A.D. 1154, and in the

CORFE CASTLE FROM NINE BARROW DOWN

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immediately succeeding reigns sums spent upon repairs to the edifice are mentioned in the royal accounts, and it was certainly a favourite place of residence with King John, who placed so much reliance upon its strength that during his dispute with the Barons it is chronicled that the royal jewels and regalia were deposited at Corfe. But John did not merely use the castle as a place of residence, for it was turned by him into a prison as well; and after the attempt of Arthur to ascend the throne twenty-four nobles of Mirabeau, in Poitou, were transported thence and imprisoned, with the result that all but two were starved to death.

Among the other famous people who were incarcerated in this old fortress was Prince Arthur's sister Eleanor, known as the Damozel of Brittany, who was imprisoned here for several years in company with two daughters of King William of Scotland who had been sent to England as hostages for peace, and for securing the payment of 1100 marks of silver to King John, who had exacted that sum after marching a powerful army into Scotland in the year 1209. Eleanor was afterwards removed to various prisons, including Gloucester and Marlborough, and thence to Bristol, where she died, after having suffered an almost incredibly long imprisonment of upwards of forty years.

So strong a fortress had Corfe by this time become that during the rebellion of Simon de Montfort it was held by the Barons for a period of nearly five years against Henry III. It was in a dungeon of Corfe that the unfortunate Edward II. was confined during a

short period prior to his being conveyed to Berkeley Castle, where he was murdered on September 21, 1326.

During the succeeding couple of centuries after the visit in 1356 paid to Corfe by Edward III., the history of the castle is uneventful. It passed by grant from Edward VI. to his uncle, the Protector Somerset; and Queen Elizabeth ultimately sold it to Sir Christopher Hatton, from whom it was acquired by purchase by Sir John Bankes, Lord Chief Justice of the Common Pleas, the ancestor of the present family.

But Corfe was destined a few years later to play an important part in the struggle between the King and the Parliament which was to be waged so fiercely in many parts of Wessex. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Sir John Bankes was summoned to the King's standard at York, and his wife and family took refuge in Corfe Castle. Although the Parliamentarian forces were very active on the coast and in the neighbourhood of some other towns not far distant, Corfe Castle escaped their attention until 1643, when a detachment of the Roundhead forces was despatched to attempt the surprise of the castle on May Day, when it was known that a large number of the retainers as well as the inhabitants of Corfe would be away engaged in hunting. The garrison of the castle, however, got wind of this surprise visit, and succeeded in closing the gates ere the enemy appeared. Foiled thus, and disappointed by their failure to surprise the castle, the Parliamentarians demanded the surrender of the cannon which the fortress contained, and despatched a body of sailors to enforce

their demands. Lady Bankes, however, was a brave woman, and succeeded in mounting one or two of the guns on the walls, and in firing the same to such effect that many of the attacking party were wounded, and the rest speedily took to flight.

The castle, however, was very imperfectly provisioned, and to obtain a sufficient supply she had to indulge in a ruse by which she sought to make the inhabitants of Poole believe she had surrendered. Then she sent messengers to Prince Maurice, who lay at Blandford with some considerable force, entreating him to come or to send assistance; and he hurriedly despatched Captain Lawrence to take command of the castle. The Roundhead forces soon made their appearance at Corfe, and on the 23rd of June, under cover of a thick mist, they arrived from Poole and seized the town before those in the castle had discovered their presence; and, taking up their position on the slopes of the commanding downs, they commenced to bombard the latter. So strong, however, did the fortress prove, or so inferior in calibre were the guns at the disposal of the Parliamentarians, that the cannonading had little effect. Realising that the reduction of Corfe by this means not only would be slow, but even unlikely to succeed in the end, the besiegers decided upon a grand assault. And so on a fine summer's morning, June 26, led by Sir Walter Earle and other officers, the Roundheads, to the number of some six hundred, swarmed out of the grey stone houses and streets of the little town, and down from the heights,

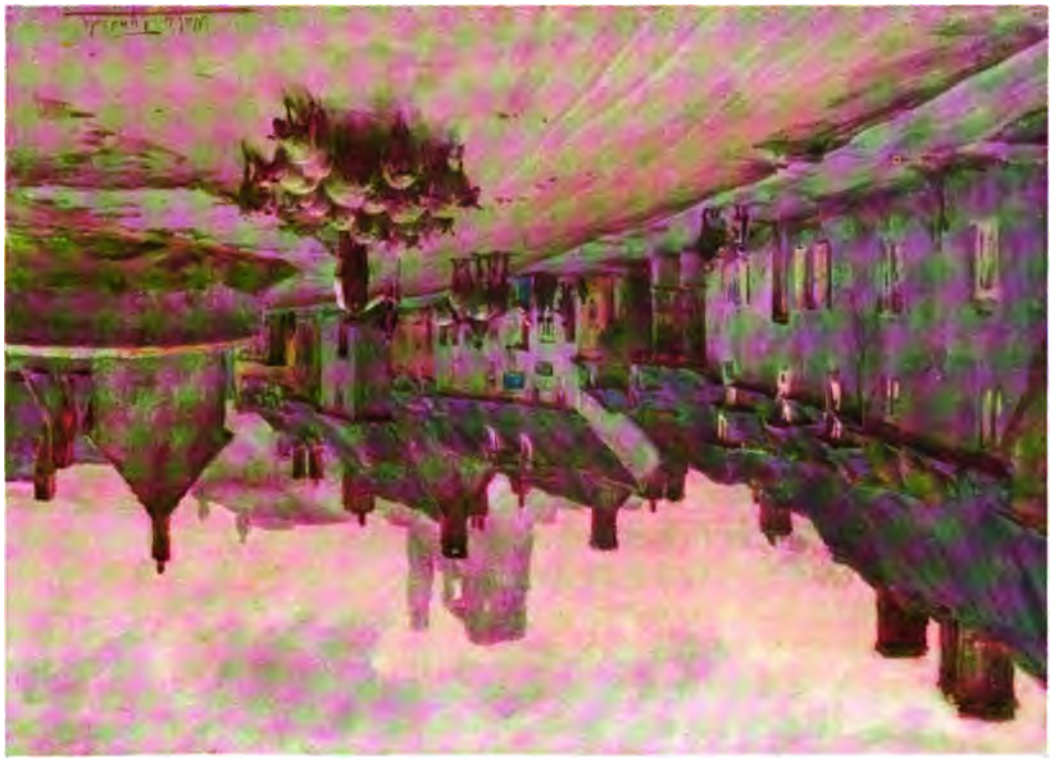
and rushed up the slopes of the hill on which the castle stood.

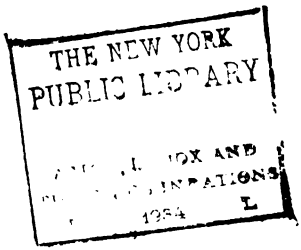
An old report of this attack speaks very contemptuously of the action of Sir Walter Earle and the other officers, including Captains Henry Jarvis, Sydenham, and Scutt; the first-named of whom, it would appear, was an arrant coward, who, although encouraging his men in the attack, took good care to keep out of harm's way himself, even being seen "to creep on all fours on the sides of the hill, to keep himselfe out of danger." And the same writer goes on to say: "This base cowardisme in the assaylants added courage and resolution to the defendants."

So bold, indeed, did the small handful of these latter become, that they sallied forth and replenished their somewhat scanty provisions by the capture of eight cows and a bull, which they brought into the castle without loss. This attack repulsed, although the besiegers had meanwhile mounted a cannon on top of the church tower, and "without fears of profanation had broken up the organ pipes for shot cases and torn off the lead from the roof of the church for bullets, the active siege was for the moment abandoned." But on the arrival of reinforcements, in the shape of some 150 sailors, with several cart-loads of petards and grenades and other warlike stores, and a number of scaling-ladders, the attack was again renewed. But on these failing to effect any impression upon the castle, and the courage of the besiegers evaporating on account of the large number who had been killed and

CORFE ("CORVESGATE") CASTLE FROM WEST STREET

A scene in *The Hand of Ethelberta*

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wounded, not less than £20—at that date a very considerable sum—was promised to the first man who would successfully scale the walls. This had the effect of heartening up the attacking party, who made several assaults by means of the scaling-ladders and with fire-balls, with which they endeavoured to set fire to the place.

But all these attempts were met with such a spirited reception on the part of the besieged that the attack was ultimately abandoned, and the besiegers suddenly withdrew on an alarm being raised that Royalist forces of considerable strength were approaching. The gallant commander of the castle, Captain Lawrence, who had been so ably assisted in his arrangements for the defence by Lady Bankes herself, was not, however, destined to escape from indirect personal loss, as Sir Walter Earle, chagrined at being repulsed, on retiring to Poole sent a party to the house of Sir Edward Lawrence, his father, which they plundered and destroyed, leaving only the four walls standing, and forcing Lady Lawrence to run for her life into the woods.

For nearly three years the castle remained unmolested, although the brave lady who had defended it had suffered the loss of her husband, who had died in 1644.

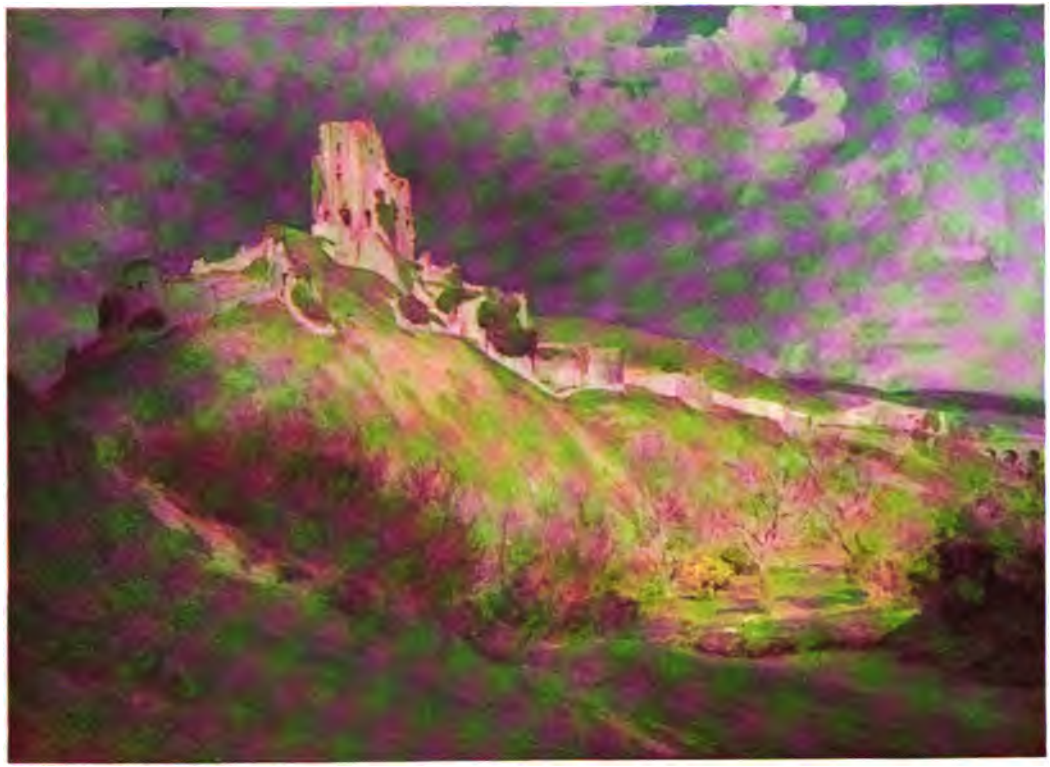
In May of 1645 Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper received instructions from the Committee for the Western Counties to "forthwith repair to the Isle of Purbeck, and to draw together as speedily as may be out of the

garrisons of Poole, Wareham, Lulworth, and Weymouth such numbers of foot and horse as are sufficient to block up Corfe Castle." Provision was also made that, in the event of the castle being surrendered, Sir Anthony Cooper should have authority to make such terms for the freedom of the defenders and immunity of their estates as he saw fit. This was done, and in the October of the same year the castle was once again besieged, this time by Colonel Bingham, whose troops had been reinforced by several regiments sent to his assistance by General Fairfax. As was the case at former sieges, a splendid resistance was offered, and it was not until after the forty-eighth day that one of the officers of the garrison, a Lieutenant-Colonel Pitman, decided to play the traitor, letting the enemy without know "that, if he might have protection, he would deliver the place to the Parliament." This offer was thankfully accepted by Colonel Bingham, who could not have felt at all certain of even ultimately reducing the place.

Pitman's plan was to introduce some of the besiegers into the castle in the guise of friends, and he thus proposed to Colonel Anketil, the governor, that he (Pitman) should fetch a hundred men out of Somersetshire to reinforce the garrison. To enable him to carry out this act of treachery, he pretended to the governor that he would get leave to pass the enemy's entrenchments under the pretence of procuring an exchange for his brother, then a prisoner within the Parliamentary lines, for one of the enemy's officers who had been captured and was a prisoner in the

CORFE CASTLE

The "Corvesgate Castle" of *The Hand of Ethelberta*



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castle. Colonel Anketil fell into the trap, doubtless desiring above all things that the garrison, wearied out by much watching and anxiety, should be reinforced in some such way as Pitman suggested.

The traitor left the castle, and, instead of going into Somersetshire, returned shortly afterwards with a party which he pretended were Royalists, but who in fact were Parliamentarian soldiers drawn out of the Weymouth garrison.

Pitman led them under cover of night to the gate agreed upon for their entrance. Colonel Anketil was there to receive them, and when some fifty of these men had entered the castle he appears to have become alarmed, and ordered the gate to be shut, saying that fifty were as many as he wanted. Pitman expostulated with him, and urged that he should admit the rest, who had travelled so far at the risk of their lives, and who, if kept without the castle, would run the risk of capture by the enemy. Meantime those who had already entered speedily possessed themselves of the King's and Queen's Towers and the two platforms, ready for the besiegers when, as had been arranged beforehand, they should make a fresh attack. This assault was not, however, made till daybreak, when the Royalists within the castle speedily realised that they had been betrayed. A parley was arranged, and it was agreed that the lives of the garrison should be spared, and that those who belonged to the town should return to their homes.

So fell Corfe Castle, one of the last fortresses to hold out for the King in the West. Thirty Parliamentary

prisoners were released, and huge stores, arms, ammunition, provisions, and other things were obtained. After the place had been plundered of everything of value, the Parliamentarian forces undermined the walls in various directions, and blew up the towers and keep.

Thus was destroyed in the course of a few days a historic pile, which had for five centuries stood overawing the little town to the south of it and forming one of the keys to the possession of the west country. Soon what had once been in turn a royal residence and a strong fortress was little more than a heap of confused though impressive ruins. But the Corfe Castle of to-day is not even so grand a ruin as when the Parliamentary forces left it, for many of the houses both in Corfe itself and in the neighbouring district are stated to have been built with stones taken from the ancient fabric.

It is not necessary to enter here into a detailed architectural description of this wonderful structure, the ancient importance and strength of which can easily be gathered from even a cursory inspection of the present ruins. It possessed a beauty and strength second to none of the feudal fortresses in the south-west of England, which the iconoclastic spirit of the conquerors led them to dismantle with far more completeness than was at all necessary to render it no longer capable of offence.

As the ruins now stand, they present a wonderful picture of confusion and overthrown strength ; portions

EAST STREET, CORFE CASTLE

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of the walls and towers having fallen from their original position on the mound into the brook which runs at its foot, and even having in their fall rebounded across the stream and the environing road. Whether viewed from north or south, Corfe Castle presents one of the most impressive sights imaginable, and, seen at dawn or sunset, is a spectacle of great charm and impressive beauty.

Of the village of Corfe itself not much need be said. It is somewhat bare and uninteresting, consisting of one straggling main street and a little square. The church has been restored, and possesses little of interest save its tower, which is of the Perpendicular period. The most interesting features of the place nowadays are the Greyhound Inn, with its quaint projecting porch and low-ceiled rooms, and the market cross, which, for many years a mere shattered stump, has now been restored to its original form.

CHAPTER IX

THE STORY OF BATH AND WINCHESTER

THE two towns which form the subject of the present chapter are situated respectively almost on the north-western and north-eastern limits of the district comprised in the present volume. Though so widely separated, they may, from their historical importance and the antiquity of their associations, well be dealt with together.

Bath, which is so picturesquely situated that it has been well called "the queen of all the spas in the world," is placed in the hollow and on the steep side of the Avon valley, which, curving round the city, winds through its very heart along an east to west course.

Most of its buildings are of what has become known as Bath stone, and the use of this as material for even the smaller private dwellings has done much to give the appearance of splendour and solidity which at once strikes all who visit the town. The fact, too, that stone has been so universally used in the erection of public buildings and private houses has resulted in a style of architecture that is in many instances vastly superior to the type generally found in modern towns. And

whether it be the beautiful abbey or the dwellings situated on, below, and above the northern slopes, where terraces and crescents rise tier upon tier to a height of some 700 feet, the effect is the same—a very striking and unique one.

The testimony of many famous writers has been given to Bath from time to time as a place of singular beauty and impressiveness. One of these, Walter Savage Landor, who travelled widely and was familiar with all that is best and most beautiful in Italian cities, gave the palm to Bath for beauty and purity of architecture, and made the place his home for many years.

Although the city is no longer the fashionable resort that it was at the beginning and early part of the last century, it is still one of the favourite residential cities in England with those for whom beauty of situation, of architecture, and of climate are matters of first consideration. Although of comparatively modern growth, it has traditions so ancient that they go back even beyond the commencement of the Christian era.

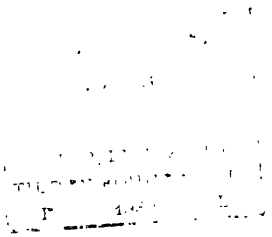
There are two legends of Bath, both relating to Bladud, son of the British King Lud Hudibras, and the discovery—or perhaps we should say recognition—of its springs as possessing medicinal properties. The later legend is that Bladud, a leper, expelled for that cause from his father's palace, wandered homeless to Keynsham, and there was compelled by stress of circumstances to adopt the occupation of swineherd. The story goes that his pigs became infected by him with the same dreadful disease; but whilst one day

wandering in the valley of the Avon they rolled in the warm mud, where the mineral waters had formed pools, and became completely cured. Bladud, astonished at this seeming miracle, tried the same method of cure, with a like success ; and, returning to his father's palace, he was received back again into sonship, was sent to Athens for education, and afterwards in due course becoming king, about 863 B.C. he founded a city upon the spot of his healing.

The other legend, as related by Geoffrey of Monmouth, runs as follows. Bladud was skilled in the black art, and created "the Bath" by means of it, and by placing a mysterious stone in the spring which he found that made the water hot and capable of healing sick persons. Unfortunately for him, he became so enamoured of his power that he attempted to fly with a pair of wings of his own construction, and although he managed to cover the distance from Bath to London successfully, when hovering above the latter city his wings failed him, and, falling on to the roof of the Temple of Apollo, he was dashed to pieces.

It seems probable, however, that the virtues of the Bath springs were discovered first by the Romans, as there is little doubt that they were used by them for medicinal purposes about A.D. 44. By the Romans the spot was known as Aquæ Solis, and was one of their most important stations. Here they built a temple to the goddess Minerva, and also instituted a college of armourers, which manufactured the weapons of the legions. The Roman town was surrounded by walls,

BATH ABBEY AND PUMP-ROOM



which were approximately along the line formed by the streets afterwards known as Lower Boroughwalls, Westgate Buildings, Sawclose, and Upper Boroughwalls: foundations of the ancient ramparts have been frequently discovered when excavations have been made. They must have enclosed a considerable area, in which the principal buildings stood round about what afterwards became the site of the abbey churchyard. The temple which was speedily erected, and had a beautiful portico of Corinthian columns, stood near the site of the present pump-room. Many fragments were unearthed at the end of the eighteenth century; and the platform on which another temple must have stood was discovered whilst foundations were being dug at the White Hart Hotel in 1867.

The Roman baths, for which, of course, the city is more particularly noted, were of a most magnificent description, beautified with columns and tessellated floors, and ornamented in the most chaste of Roman styles. The principal remains of these baths were discovered in the middle of the eighteenth century; and not only were the flues found full of soot, but also the bricks were marked with fire. During the many centuries which had passed since they were last used, by a gradual accretion of the soil, the street-level had been raised 16 feet, and thus it was that the remains were for so long a period undiscovered. The largest bath is 111 feet long by 68 feet 6 inches wide, with a depth of about 6 feet 6 inches, and had oblong rooms with semicircular

recesses along the sides; the walls which were uncovered proved to be some 6 or 7 feet in height, and were lined with a reddish cement. But although the baths are the chief Roman remains in the city, many other relics of the period have from time to time been discovered, including inscriptions, altars, Samian ware, and several fragments of beautiful statues, and a wonderful bronze head which Warner identified with that of Apollo, but which other authorities incline to think is that of Minerva.

Bath, with its many beautiful buildings and monuments, suffered as much or more than any other Roman settlement in Wessex from the departure of the legions. Most of the villas, altars, and other buildings which had been erected around the temple and on the slopes of the hill were soon destroyed, and a period of barbarism almost equal to that which prevailed before the advent of the Romans succeeded their departure, during which nearly all traces of what may be called Roman Bath disappeared.

It was in this succeeding period that the Arthurian legend took shape, and several authorities have identified the spot of Arthur's famous victory over the Saxons, in 520, at Mons Badonicus, as Bath; but the more probable place of the battle is Badbury Rings, near Wimborne, in Dorsetshire. The British power in the West of England was destroyed in 577 by the Saxon chiefs Cuthwine and Ceawlin, who overcame the Britons at Deorham, and also captured Gloucester, Cirencester, and Bath.

Mediæval Bath

After the capture of Bath by the Saxons, it became a chief city of the district of Hwiccia, and after a time, on losing its original name, it became known as Bathanceaster, the city of the bath, from which its modern name has undoubtedly been derived.

The fact that the great Roman road from London to the West passed through Oxfordshire and by way of Marlborough came to Bath, and two other Roman roads, the Via Julia from South Wales by the Aust Passage to Cunetio, and the Fosse Way from Lincoln to Axminster *via* Ilchester, converged at Bath, no doubt had not a little to do with its early rise to a position of importance.

In 676 King Osric founded a convent here for nuns, the patronage of which was acquired by Offa, King of Mercia, in 781. By this time it had been turned from a convent to a monastery for monks only, and this foundation, dedicated to St Peter, remained thus until the Dissolution. During the Saxon period Bath made great strides towards being a town of importance, and from the time of Offa it became a royal demesne, which in later times was held by Edward the Confessor's wife Edith.

A mint was also established here, and most of the Anglo-Saxon and Danish monarchs after Athelstan appear to have had their coinage struck at Bath.

In 973, at the season of Pentecost, and on the occasion of the coronation of Edgar by Archbishops Dunstan and Oswald, a royal pageant of wonderful magnificence took place in the city, and Leyland records the fact

that, in grateful memory of Edgar's munificence on this occasion, "they (the monks) pray in all the ceremonies for his soule, and a king is elected every yere in joyful remembrance of King Edgar and the privileges given to the toune by him. This King is fested and his adherents by the richest man of the toune." When Canute's father, Sweyn, invaded England and conquered Wessex in 1015, he made Bath his headquarters.

After this period, the history of Bath was for some time comparatively uneventful; but in the reign of William Rufus, in 1087, it was burned by Geoffrey, Bishop of Coutances, and Robert de Mowbray, in the attempt they made to place Duke Robert on the throne, but was rebuilt by John de Villula, Bishop of Wells, who in 1090, having bought the remains of the city of Bath from the King, transferred his bishopric to Bath, and became the first Bishop of Bath and Wells. The transference of the see from Wells to Bath had the effect of greatly adding to the latter's prosperity; but this was considerably checked during the disturbed state into which the country fell whilst the struggle between Stephen and Matilda was in progress.

During this period, Bath was alternately held by the forces of both parties. Geoffrey de Talebot, one of the chief of Matilda's supporters, was found in disguise at Bath, and was thrown into prison. In revenge for this act, a party of her adherents, who were stationed at Bristol, marched from thence, and, reaching Bath at midnight, seized Bishop Robert and carried

him off to imprisonment in the castle until an exchange was brought about.

In the reign of Richard Cœur de Lion, Bishop Savaric parted with the lordship of the town in exchange for that of the rich Abbey of Glastonbury. His immediate successor, Bishop Joceline, removed the bishopric once more to Wells, and when Bishop de Villula had taken the place of the Abbot the abbacy with its dignity was lost for ever to Bath, there only remaining then a priory and the prior, with very much reduced revenues. The possession of the city for the next century or more passed from one person to another; Edward I. bestowing it as a dower upon his Queen, Eleanor, and afterwards rescinding the grant in favour of Bishop Burnell. Edward III., in 1341, granted the borough a confirmation of former statutes and gave it additional liberties; and at the same time a bridge was thrown across the Avon to Lyncombe, which proved a great boon to the traders of Bath, who formerly had had to wade across the ford with their goods when the annual fair at Lyncombe was held.

Queen Elizabeth visited the city in 1591, whilst on her way to see her godson, Sir J. Harington, at Kelson.

During the Great Rebellion, Bath proved of little use to either party, on account of the fact that, being surrounded by heights, it was quite impossible to hold it against even the light artillery of those days. But quite close to Bath one of the great battles of the war in the West was fought on July 13, 1643, that

of Lansdowne. In July, two years later, the city was selected as his headquarters by Sir William Waller.

In June 1685, on the approach of Monmouth and his troops, the inhabitants shut their gates against the Duke, and obliged him to commence the retreat upon his previous line of advance which culminated on the fatal and disastrous field of Sedgemoor. Although Bath would not receive the Protestant Duke, not a few of its inhabitants fought for his cause, and as a consequence a number of them were condemned by Judge Jeffreys to death or transportation to the plantations, and six of them were executed at Bath with all the horrors which marked the execution of the rebels in other places of the West.

In ancient times Bath enjoyed an unusual amount of royal patronage, as it was visited by Charles II., who was accompanied by James, Duke of York, the Duchess of York, and Prince Rupert, in 1663; and Princess Anne — afterwards Queen Anne — came to Bath in 1692. Owing to the fact that she was out of favour at Court, the Mayor and corporation were forbidden to attend her to church, as was then the custom. But she repeated her visit ten years later at their request, when a magnificent pageant was arranged in her honour. About twenty years afterwards the Princess Amelia paid a visit to the city, and the event was also made the occasion of a great deal of merry-making and general rejoicing. A few years later Frederick, Prince of Wales, paid a visit to the town, and at the end of the eighteenth century the Duke and

Duchess of York were also at Bath, and in 1796 the Prince of Wales came.

Although Bath has never been the seat of any very important trade or manufacture, it is probable that cloth was made in some considerable quantity in ancient times, and the woollen trade flourished in the town during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries; and even from the reign of Henry VIII. to the seventeenth century the place was noted for "Bath beaver," a variety of woollen cloth. It was about the commencement of the reign of Charles II. that the industry began to decline, and nowadays no traces of it exist except in a customary grant made every twenty-four years, from a sum left by Sir Thomas White in 1566, as a loan to young men of good character going into business—this fund being especially bequeathed to places noted for woollen manufactories.

The ancient annual fairs of Bath, relics of the customs of past ages, were suppressed in 1852, much to the distress of the more lively of the inhabitants.

It is supposed that the cloth-making industry was founded, or at all events greatly encouraged, by the prior and abbots of Bath Abbey; and this supposition is borne out by the fact that a shuttle was added to the arms of the monastery in the fourteenth century, and was to be seen on the front of the abbey as late as the last century.

The architectural beauties of Bath are nowadays almost entirely modern; very few old buildings still remain, and certainly none of those Leyland in the

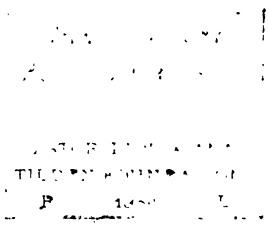
sixteenth century and Chapman in the seventeenth century so eloquently described. A few fragments of the ancient walls and of the ramparts still remain, but singularly few traces of ancient buildings have survived. Pepys, who visited the city in 1668, left a very flattering description of it, which is possibly not untraceable to the fact that he records "having dined very well." But he can only have seen the outside and fairer characteristics of Bath, as Wood, a noted architect, states that in the end of the seventeenth century the interiors of the Bath houses were very poor; and he states that "the houses of the richest inhabitants of the city were for the most part of the meanest architecture, and only two of them could show the modern comforts of sash windows."

The growth of the city seems almost to have stood still from the end of the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth centuries, as it is recorded that during that period it was only increased by seventeen houses.

In olden times the "beggars of Bath" were famous. The reason of their number and pertinacity is given by Fuller as follows: "Whither should fowl flock in hard frost but to the barn door? Here all the two seasons bring the general confluence of gentry."

Modern Bath, with its fine architecture and appearance of general prosperity, and its popularity as a residential resort, owes much to the work of two men—Wood, the builder, and Beau Nash, the master of the ceremonies. It was in 1728 that the elder

THE BRIDGE AT PRIOR PARK, BATH



Wood began his building speculations, and erected Queen's Square on what had been a piece of waste land. Twelve years later the fine North and South Parades were built on what was formerly a mere marsh, and then followed Gay Street and the Circus. The magnificent Royal Crescent was designed by the elder Wood in 1769, and was erected about the same time as Camden Place and Pulteney Street. During this period Bath had immensely increased in popularity, and from the middle of the eighteenth century till nearly the end of the reign of George III. it was the focus of fashion and one of the greatest health-resorts in the Kingdom.

The name of Beau Nash has become inseparably connected with Bath. He commenced life in the army, but soon, tiring of the profession, he left it and turned to the law, spending most of his time, however, as a man about town. He soon ran through his property, and at the age of thirty was a ruined man, and almost entirely without resources of any kind. But the lucky circumstance of his visit to Bath showed him a means of attaining wealth, fame, and power, which his genius for trifles, his excellent taste, his shrewdness, and his organising ability soon turned to good account. On his arrival at Bath in 1703 the town was almost entirely devoid of any amusements. There was but one promenade, and the only ballroom was the bowling-green, with an orchestra composed of a fiddle and a hautboy. So neglected was law and order that no respectable woman could pass along

the streets without molestation after dark. The Pump Room was without a manager, and, to add to the misfortunes of the town, physicians were beginning to throw doubt upon the medicinal value of its spa.

One famous doctor, who had taken affront at some slight he had received at Bath, virulently attacked it as a health-resort by the publication of a pamphlet throwing doubt upon the efficacy of its waters. It was at this moment that Beau Nash came upon the scene, and he soon, by the institution of a band and other amusements, attracted to the town a large and ever-increasing clientèle of fashionable and wealthy people. Soon, under his direction, a handsome assembly room sprang up, and Bath was established without question as the "Queen of Health-Resorts."

Nash reached the zenith of his popularity and success during the third and fourth decades of the eighteenth century, and then came the inevitable decline, when he suffered both from poverty and the desertion of his gay and titled friends. At last the corporation of Bath, recognising what he had done for the town, found it necessary to grant him a pension of ten guineas a month, and on his death, at the age of eighty-seven, in 1761, they defrayed the cost of a public funeral. From the time of Beau Nash's advent upon the scene Bath continued to grow in importance and in size, and soon many of the meadows which lay on the outskirts of the town were covered with fine streets.

Bath in Fiction

Both Miss Austen and Miss Burney laid scenes of their novels in Bath, and many readers will doubtless remember those laid in the Pump Room and its vicinity which appear in the pages of *Evelina*, and the pictures of old-time Bath "society" life to be found in *Northanger Abbey*.

The abbey church, which was dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, was originally founded as a nunnery by Osric in 676, and was destroyed by the Danes, and refounded as a college of secular canons by Offa in 775. These secular canons were in the reign of Edgar (970) superseded by Benedictine regulars presided over by Alphege, the afterwards martyred Archbishop of Canterbury. From the time of John of Tours the abbey was governed by a prior until the dissolution of the monasteries, when it was surrendered to the Crown by Prior Holway in 1539. The church was offered to the city for the sum of 500 marks, but, as the offer was declined, the glass, iron, and lead of the building were sold to certain merchants, who stripped it and left only the mere carcase of the beautiful building remaining. This was purchased by Humphrey Colles in 1542, who sold it to Matthew Colthurst, by whose son it was made a present to the city of Bath, and it has since remained the mother church of the town.

The church had been commenced in the last year of the fifteenth century by Prior Birde and Bishop Oliver King, but its progress was stopped for a time by the dissolution of the abbey forty years later. The

building was left in a very incomplete state, and rapidly became ruinous and dilapidated, until one Peter Chapman, in the year 1572, commenced the repair of its eastern end. The church, which is one of the latest specimens of Perpendicular Gothic in Britain, was slowly repaired by subscriptions during Elizabeth's reign, and at last the choir was sufficiently finished to be consecrated. Bishop Montague afterwards completed the nave in the early part of the seventeenth century, and the aisles and transept were added by various benefactors.

There is a curious tradition concerning the reasons which led Bishop Montague to undertake the work he did. According to the story, one day the Bishop, whilst walking with Sir J. Harington of Kelston, was overtaken by a sudden heavy downpour. The latter led the Bishop into the roofless church, under the pretence of taking shelter therein. The Bishop realised the pity of its incompleteness, and undertook the work of finishing it. This building, which contains relics of the work of Bishop de Villula in the bases of the Norman columns, is said by Richman to contain a singular mixture of plainness and ornament, some of the mouldings and details being extremely large and others uncommonly small: it nevertheless contains some parts of great beauty. Various restorations have from time to time been carried out, and those of Sir Gilbert Scott were admirable and in strict keeping with the original design. The building is now unfortunately sadly overcrowded with tasteless monuments, and in

CLAVERTON MANOR, NEAR BATH

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUN

connection with this there is an admirable French *jeu d'esprit*:

> Messieurs, vous voyez très bien ici
> Que ces eaux ne sont pas d'eaux de vie.

The eastern front is very plain and heavy, but the western possesses a magnificent window of seven lights, flanked by turrets on which are carved angels ascending and descending ladders. These emblematic figures commemorate the dream or vision of Bishop King, who, tradition asserts, was induced to do the work of building the church by a revelation of the Holy Trinity, with angels on a ladder and an olive-tree supporting a crown. These latter symbols he interpreted as being the indication of his own name, Oliver King.

Although, as we have before said, many of the monuments are not distinguished by either beauty or good taste, there are some few, by such artists as Flaxman, Nollekens, Chantrey, and by Bacon the younger and Bacon the elder, which deserve attention, and serve to leaven the unsatisfactoriness of the memorials as a whole. One of the most interesting is that of Lady Waller, and her husband who fought at the battles of Lansdowne and Roundway Down. In connection with this monument there is an unpleasant (if true) story of James II., who, tradition asserts, whilst passing through the abbey in company with Friar Heddlestone, vented his anger against the great Parliamentary leader by knocking off the nose of his effigy with his sword.

Pepys, in his diary, however, exonerates James from this outrage, as, writing some years before the latter came to the throne, he mentions inspecting the monuments, "among others, Dr Venner, and Pelling, and a lady of Sir Wm. Waller's, he lying with his face broken."

The church is very rich in epitaphs and inscriptions, many of which will repay the attention of antiquarians and the curious.

Bath has no other ecclesiastical buildings save modern ones, although two of them—St James's and St Michael's—have been erected on the sites of ancient churches. The most beautiful of Bath's present-day churches is the famous Roman Catholic church of St John the Evangelist, with a lofty and striking spire.

Of other public buildings, the Pump Room, a structure of classical character with a Corinthian portico and the motto ΑΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΜΕΝ ΥΔΩΡ — water best of elements—and its memories of Beau Nash, is the chief. And here, although the attendance of people drinking the waters is far less large than in its most flourishing days, there still gathers a considerable assembly of visitors and others during the day.

Even the glories of the King's and Queen's Baths seem to have departed nowadays, and those using them are indeed a sober throng compared with the ladies and gentlemen who in the days of the town's greatest prosperity used to meet together in the water. Anstey,

the satirical author of *The New Bath Guide*, speaking of this custom, says :

> 'Twas a glorious sight to behold the fair sex
> All wading with gentlemen up to their necks.

There are several other baths, some of them of ancient origin, in addition to the two we have mentioned, which are more or less patronised nowadays, according to the particular season of the year.

None of the other buildings have any great historical interest, as the Inigo Jones Guild Hall was replaced in 1775 by the present building ; and the old Assembly Rooms, which were the scene of Beau Nash's glory, were destroyed by fire in 1820. The Upper Assembly Rooms still exist, comprising a handsome suite situated close to the Circus, and built by the younger Wood in 1771.

Many celebrated people lived at Bath during the period of its greatest prosperity—amongst them Bishop Butler, the author of *The Analogy* ; Robert Nelson, author of *Fasts and Festivals*, and the founder of the Blue Coat School in 1711 ; William Pitt, the "Great Commoner" ; and the famous painter, Thomas Gainsborough ; the famous General Wolfe ; Herschel, the astronomer ; Walter Savage Landor, author of the *Imaginary Conversations* ; and William Beckford, the author of *Vathek*, the builder of Fonthill, and an eccentric but keen collector of pictures and bric-à-brac.

Although Bath has nowadays fallen from its high estate as an ultra-fashionable watering-place, it is still

one of the most charming and picturesque towns in the whole of England, and few who visit it but have the desire to return.

Bath is on the north-western confines of Wessex, and Winchester may be said to be almost at the other extremity. Once the capital of England, this historical city is strikingly situated on the slopes and at the bottom of the chalk valley through which the river Itchen flows nearly due north and south. Surrounded as it is by chalk downs, there are many beautiful views from them of the venerable cathedral standing on the more level ground in the centre of the old town, which contains so much of architectural and antiquarian interest.

Identified with national history from the very earliest times, Winchester was originally a Celtic town situated on St Catherine's Hill and known as Gwent, afterwards renamed by the Romans Venta Belgarum, and was connected by roads, some of which remain till the present day, with other cities—Calleva (Silchester), Portus Magnus (Porchester), and Sorbiodunum (Salisbury). The Roman city was an important one, and few places in England have yielded so many and such interesting remains of the occupation.

The great Roman road which passed through the town in those far-off days is still preserved in the guise of the modern High Street, south of which then lay the more important part of the city. The name of Wintanceastre was given to the place by the Saxons when they took it in 495 ; and after the final subduing

A WESSEX VILLAGE

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ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

of the Britons it was created the capital of Wessex, and from that date its ecclesiastical history may be said to have commenced. Indeed, it may be considered at this period to have been the capital of England itself, for it was here that Egbert proclaimed his lordship; that Æthelwulf made his gift to the Church; Edward the Elder, Alfred the Great, Athelstan, and Canute held their courts; and many of the ancient kings of Wessex were crowned and buried.

Winchester in those early days underwent, as did so many other towns, great vicissitudes, and during the reign of Athelstan it was attacked by the Danes; and according to a legend the issue was decided by a single combat between the famous Guy, Earl of Warwick, and Colbrand, the champion of the invaders. It was also at Winchester that William the Conqueror, Stephen, and Richard I. were crowned; and during the reign of the first-named the great fair on St Giles' Hill, which was destined afterwards to raise the city to such a height of commercial importance and recognition, was instituted. To this fair came eventually merchants from Flanders, France, Italy, and other parts of the Continent, anxious to sell their goods in exchange for the noted English cloth.

In 1285 the first Winchester Parliament was held, at which the famous statutes of Winchester were framed; and during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the city was frequently the scene of royal visits and royal pageants. Its woollen trade, which declined towards the end of the reign of Henry VIII.

and gradually became almost extinct, has never been replaced by any similar manufacture or trade, and nowadays the city depends upon the fact of it being an episcopal seat and possessing one of the most ancient schools in England for its chief claim to importance.

Few places, indeed, in the Kingdom possess greater historical interest than Winchester, nor are many more picturesquely situated or more closely surrounded with places of interest for the antiquarian and the general tourist.

The cathedral, with which visitors are at first sight apt to be a little disappointed, is one of the most interesting and in some particulars the most beautiful in England. Its great length is the fact that strikes the visitor first: the nave is very long, though rather narrow, and, including the choir and Lady Chapel, the cathedral is the longest in England. It seems more than probable that the present building not only occupies part of the site on which stood the Saxon church of Cenwalh, erected in the latter part of the seventh century, but also that of the original Roman church of St Birinus. The former was rebuilt in the latter part of the tenth century by Bishop Æthelwold, and the remains of St Swithin were translated thereto. In these two churches many of the Saxon kings were crowned and buried; the present cathedral being commenced by Bishop Walkelin immediately after the Norman Conquest. Although the exterior is largely Perpendicular in style, traces of Bishop Walkelin's Norman work are still to be found in the piers and

walls of the nave. The very plain west front was erected by Bishop Edington in the fourteenth century, who, it would appear, was next to Wykeham one of the most active of Winchester bishops as regards building operations. The nave was partly pulled down when the west front was built, and in consequence the extreme western end is in a different style from the other portion, and this is particularly noticeable of the north aisle.

The nave is considered by many to be the finest and perhaps the most simple example of Perpendicular work remaining in England; it was finished by Cardinal Beaufort and Bishop Waynflete, who succeeded William of Wykeham. One curious feature that is very noticeable is the Perpendicular work which was engrafted on the Norman by the latter, who with great and unusual boldness cut the Norman work into harmony with then modern ideas. The north and south aisles contain many interesting memorials of military, literary, and ecclesiastical celebrities. In the nave stands the exquisite chapel of William of Wykeham, which was built during his life, in the fourteenth century, on the site of an altar to the Virgin. The oak screen is modern, and was erected to the memory of Bishops Wilberforce and Garnier.

The fine pulpit is of fifteenth-century date, and was the gift of Prior Silkstede. The reredos at the back of the altar is also a beautiful piece of work dating from the fifteenth century. The stone screen on the sides of the presbytery was added by Fox about the com-

mencement of the sixteenth century, as were also the curious chests which are said to contain the bones of six Saxon kings and bishops transferred from the more ancient church. Alfred the Great was first buried in the old minster, but tradition asserts that after his bones had been twice removed they became lost. The bones of the kings whose names are on the chests must have been mixed together, if not at the time of their first transportation by Bishop Henry de Blois, certainly when they were put into the chests by Fox; and as the boxes were broken open by the Parliamentarians during the Civil War, their authenticity must be taken upon trust. The remains are supposed to be those of Kings Eadulph, Kynegile, Kenulph, Egbert, Canute, Rufus, Edmund, and Edred, Queen Emma, and Bishops Wina and Alwyn.

The patron saint of Winchester was Bishop Swithin, afterwards canonised, who is so well known owing to his connection with the legend of St Swithin's Day and its forty days' rain.

The north transept is one of the most interesting portions of the cathedral, and contains the greatest amount of Norman work; the triforium and clerestory arches are all in probability Walkelin's work. The chapel of the Holy Sepulchre contains some very singularly interesting early mural paintings of the incidents of the Passion. In the north aisle of the presbytery is the monument of Hardicanute, the last Danish-English monarch. In the north chapel of the Guardian Angels, dating from the end of the

twelfth century, amongst other monuments is that of Bishop Æthelmar, dating from the thirteenth century.

The Lady Chapel, with its exquisite arcading, is probably the work of three different persons, Bishop de Lacy, and Priors Silkstede and Hunton. There are here also curious mural paintings representing scenes in the history of the Virgin Mary; in the chapel is a plain tombstone said to mark the grave of William Rufus, who, after his death in the New Forest, was conveyed in a cart to Winchester for burial. The place originally chosen was close to, or under, the great tower, whose subsequent fall was regarded by the superstitious as a token of the Divine anger. Rufus' bones were then taken up and re-interred before the high altar, and were in 1868 finally removed to their present resting-place. There, however, appears to be considerable evidence that the bones were long before collected by Fox, and that they are probably in one of the chests we have already referred to.

There are four interesting chantries close by—that of Waynflete, dating from the fifteenth century, and distinguished for its beautiful canopy; and those of Cardinal Beaufort, of rather earlier date, Bishop Gardiner, which contains the tombstone of King Edmund, and Bishop Fox, dating from the early part of the sixteenth century. In the south aisle is the burial-place of Richard, son of William the Conqueror, and in the south transept lies the venerable Isaac Walton, who died in 1683, part-author of the famous *Complete Angler.*

Outside this noble and ancient fane are precincts well in keeping with the calm and beauty of the building itself. On the south side of the cathedral lies the greater portion of the picturesque close, with the deanery and residences of the various canons. Of the ancient cloisters, which were pulled down in the reign of Elizabeth by Bishop Horn, there are few remains; but what there are can be seen on the left side, coming out of the south door in the grounds of the deanery. A row of Norman arches, visible from the close, form a portion of the old chapter-house in which Archbishop Langton absolved King John.

The deanery contains many interesting remains and relics of the past—amongst others, the Hospitium or Guest Hall, dating from the time of Edward I., now used as the Dean's stable, and the great hall, now modernised and divided into several portions.

It was at the deanery that Charles II. several times lodged, and it was here that the notorious Nell Gwynne was refused admission by Prebendary Ken, afterwards made Bishop of Bath and Wells, and was compelled to content herself with an inferior lodgment outside the precincts.

Winchester has ever since Saxon times been noted for its educational establishment. Alfred made it "the home of all the learning and the arts known in that day," and it was here that the famous and most valuable Anglo-Saxon Chronicle was commenced. Winchester College has been famous since the days when William of Wykeham built it, in 1387–98, and arranged its

THE RETRO-CHOIR, WINCHESTER CATHEDRAL, WITH THE CHANTRIES OF CARDINAL BEAUFORT AND BISHOP WAYNFLETE

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internal economy on the strange Scriptural symbolism which has made it unique in that respect amongst all schools. This included a warden and ten fellows, who represented the eleven Apostles, excluding Judas; seventy scholars and two masters, representing the seventy-two disciples; six chaplains and clerks, representing the six deacons; and sixteen choristers, representing the four great and twelve minor prophets.

The school buildings, which extend on the south side of the close and along the banks of the Itchen, are very considerable, consisting mainly of two quadrangles, in the first of which are the residence of the warden of the college and surrounding offices, and the inner quadrangle containing the school buildings, many of which retain their ancient form and are of great interest. The chief of these are the chapel, dining-hall, dormitories, class-rooms, and kitchen. Over the gateway leading to the first quadrangle are statues of the Virgin Mary and the Archangel Gabriel, which fortunately escaped the destruction wrought on many other statues and images by the Puritans during the Civil War.

The chapel, which was built in 1387, is of great beauty. The wooden fan-tracery of the roof is exquisite, and the east or Jesse window, although of modern date, is considered to be a very fine copy of the original. The hall is a fine room over sixty feet in length, and is very little altered from its original condition. The old wooden trenchers which were formerly used by the scholars as plates now serve as bread-baskets. In the anteroom to the kitchen, which

is entered at the foot of the stairs leading to the hall, is the celebrated picture of "The Trusty Servant," which depicts a mysterious combination of a man, a hog, a deer, and an ass; the inscription describes the various qualities possessed by these animals, which, in the opinion of the writer, go to make a trustworthy domestic.

In the remaining portion of the quadrangle are placed the dormitories, which present a quaint example of the primitive and rather Spartan-like sleeping arrangements of the schoolboys of former times. The library contains some very rare and beautiful MSS. and early printed books; and the stained glass dates from the time of Edward III. The big school-room was built about Charles II.'s time, and has a statue of William of Wykeham over the door, by Cibber, father of the famous actor and author, Colley Cibber.

Most of the remaining buildings are more or less modern.

From this famous and beautiful old school have come throughout the centuries many of the most distinguished men in English history, more especially those famous in literature, law, and arms.

Only fragmentary ruins now remain of the old bishop's palace, known as Wolvesey Castle, which was built by Bishop Henry de Blois about the middle of the twelfth century; the fragments are of Norman date, except the chapel, which is Perpendicular. During the Civil War the castle was demolished, and a new palace was afterwards begun by Bishop Morley,

from designs of Sir Christopher Wren; but this was also pulled down, and, except for a portion of a wing now used as a class-room, nothing of it remains. Since its destruction the Bishops of Winchester have had no official residence in the city, but have always lived at Farnham Castle, Surrey.

There are many other interesting buildings in Winchester, including Morley's College; the City Cross, fifteenth-century work restored by the late Sir Gilbert Scott; and St John's Hospital, founded at the end of the thirteenth century for needy travellers. The remains of Hyde Abbey are also interesting, owing to the fact that the first abbey of the name was built by Alfred, and he himself was buried there. The ruins, however, relate to a later abbey built in the reign of Henry I.

Of the castle built by Henry III., who was born in the city in 1207, only the beautiful hall of the palace now remains, and its rows of pillars dividing it into aisles, and its church-like style of architecture. It was used for a long time as the county hall and assize court, and was restored by Wyatt. At one end of it hangs a most curious and interesting picture of King Arthur's "Round Table," showing him seated in the centre with his crown on, and each of the twenty-four radiations containing the name of a famous knight. The date of this extraordinary picture is not known, but that it is of great antiquity is proved by the fact of its mention in historical MSS. dating from the time of Henry VI.

In the courtyard of the castle many tragic scenes have been enacted in the past. Here in the fourteenth century was executed the Earl of Kent, brother of Edward II.; and at the beginning of the seventeenth century some barbarous executions of priests took place. Here also was committed one of the most heinous of judicial murders, when Dame Alice Lisle was beheaded, after sentence by the brutal Jeffreys, in 1685, for her supposed complicity in the Monmouth rebellion.

Beautifully placed amidst the chalk hills of Hampshire, full of historic memories, and still in a measure redolent with the atmosphere of ancient times, Winchester stands to-day one of the most interesting of Wessex cities, as in Saxon times it was one of the most important in the whole of England. Much has been written concerning Winchester and its history, but words after all prove but imperfect media by which to translate into actuality the beauty, interest, and sentiment which permeate an ancient town like this.

PINE-WOODS NEAR BOURNEMOUTH

Scene in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

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CHAPTER X

THE FOUR SEASONS IN WESSEX

To one who has known Wessex, has lingered lovingly amid its lanes and valleys, has climbed the steep sides of natural downs and of British and Roman camps, has seen early dawn and gorgeous and almost Venetian sunsets gradually illumine or flood the landscape with almost indescribable beauty, it is difficult indeed to determine in which of the four seasons of the year Wessex is fairest—in spring, when new life is coursing through the countryside and there is a freshness of greenery pleasant alike to the eye and the heart; in summer, when white roads stretch past broad fields of ripening corn, the shady coppices resound with the songs of birds, and the promise of harvest greets one on every side; in autumn, when the days begin to draw in and shadows to lengthen on moor and hillside, and the woods and lanes to take upon themselves the glorious mantle of the dying year; or in winter, when grey mists and tempered sunlight, hoar-frost and sparkling rime, give a beauty of their own to moorland pool, placid river, and naked hedgerows. "Each season has a beauty of its own,"

we are told, and of the four seasons in Wessex this axiom is singularly true.

Spring in Wessex! In the lanes which creep sinuously, as though indifferent of purpose, below the swart expanse of Bere Heath, part of the famous Egdon Heath of Mr Hardy's *The Return of the Native*, or lead the traveller by easy gradients into the leafy boscage of Cranborne Chase, or from the larger towns to scattered hamlets, nature is astir.

Green jewels of buds are gemming the long bare branches overhead, and on the latter throstle and blackbird carol a full-throated welcome to spring. Beneath the hedgerows the flowers are springing—bright-eyed primroses, tender-hued violets, and silvery anemones; and later on masses of may and blackthorn blossom give the hedges a bridal robe of white fragrance. The tiny rivulet, freed from icy bonds, sings its song over the pebbles, and here and there flashes with light as the sunshine strikes its fretted surface through the hedgerow or overhanging branches of trees. As Shelley sings:

> The brightest hour of unborn spring
> Through the winter wandering,
> Found, it seems, the halcyon morn
> To hoar February born;
> Bending from Heaven, in azure mirth,
> It kissed the forehead of the earth,
> And smiled upon the silent sea,
> And bade the frozen streams be free,
> And waked to music all their fountains.

The spirit of new life has commenced to strew

A WESSEX HOMESTEAD

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flowers upon the barren way, and in Wessex the joy of spring is in the air—the ambient sunshine, the blue sky with banked clouds white and impressive as Alpine peaks, and the sense of Nature's awakening.

In the coppices which lie over the hedges are wonderful carpets of vernal green diapered with the yellow blazonry of primroses and deep-blue patches of hyacinths. And as the sun sinks westward at close of day, the fretted tracery of twigs and branches, as yet but partially delivered from the starkness of winter, lies upon the mossy and flower-bedecked undergrowth.

In the vale, through which a placid river flows past willow-clad banks and rush-grown pools, at early dawn diaphanous mists have hung—mists out of which Titania's robe might have been woven; swirling vapours in fantastic shapes, at first grey and sombre, and then, as the sun creeps up over the environing hills, tinted with all the exquisite colours of nacre and of the rainbow. Upon the steel-grey pools and in the shallow backwaters coots dart like ebon shuttles to and fro, eager for the work of rough architecture which forms their nests, and leave a furrowed wake of ripples behind to mark their courses.

On the downs of Wessex shepherds are busy, and flocks once more appear to roam at large. And amid the gorse of moorland, and the stunted heather of the outer wild, birds are building to an accompaniment of twittered music and fluttered wings.

On the coast the sea breaks in gentler music, and seems to say, Winter is gone and spring is here. And

in the caves and on the rocks of deserted shores the deep organ-note of winter seas gives place to the softer lullaby of spring; and the crying of gulls and sea-birds seems softened in the mating time.

But it is in the orchards of north and north-western Wessex that spring is most exquisite. The rugged trees, which but a few months ago, in their nakedness and grotesquenesses of aged growth, appeared even in the light of day impossible of beauty, and at night alarmingly distorted, are decked with a beautiful garment of pink and white blossom, transfiguring them and rendering them lovely beyond all other springtide visions. And beneath them, as the soft breeze from off the uplands blows, comes a white and pink carpet more exquisite of tint than any yet woven for the palace of a queen—a carpeting of green and white, ghostly at dawn, and fairy-like at sundown. Surely it is on such an one that the "little, wise folk" of legend and story hold their revels.

> This is the time when bit by bit
> The days begin to lengthen sweet,
> And every minute gained is joy—

has sung a poetess. And of such is the springtide of Wessex—when, as Francis Bacon says, "the breath of flowers is far sweeter in the air, where it comes and goes like the warbling of music," and Nature, as yet untired by the labours of a year, is fresh from winter's sleep, and eager to do her best to rejoice the wayfarer, and bring hope anew into the heart of man.

When summer comes, with its wealth of blossom and

THE FROME FROM BOCKHAMPTON BRIDGE

View from Lower Mellstock Bridge, "Fiddler of the Reels" in *Life's Little Ironies*

dragon-flies, with steel-blue bodies, flashing hither and thither in the sunshine.

In the sunlit vales the cattle are lowing, standing knee-deep in the meadow grass, or in some tree-shaded pool at a river bend. And in the pasture the grass is falling beneath the rhythmic swing of the scythe, and to the mower's song. The river itself has cast the silver of its surface into Nature's melting-pot, and now, in the summer sunshine, shows long stretches of dazzling gold. In the shadows, the current plays against the rushes and pours forth a humming melody like that of a slowly driven spinning-wheel. The coot has built her nest and hatched young, and now she sails across the quiet reaches of the river with a flotilla of fledglings in her wake. Sometimes yet in Wessex, if the wanderer is fortunate, he may catch a glimpse of a sheeny kingfisher, watching from a willow trunk with bright eye, or flashing like a ray of amethyst and emerald downward into the shimmering water.

In the farther woods which lie amid the hills there is a shade for the weary—the deep shade and the silence of the eternal. Underneath is the carpet of flowers which love the coolness and the filtered lights of the woods—tall foxgloves mottled pink and white, wood betony and yellow toad-flax, and the emerald-green mosses and colour-enriched lichen, which few fabrics woven by human hands have succeeded in imitating in colour or rivalling in beauty. Whilst hidden in the upper branches of the overshadowing

SPRING IN WESSEX

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foliage the song-bird's note, hushed in the sun-stricken open, makes melody.

In the silence of the summer's day—

> The time so tranquil is and clear,
> That nowhere shall ye find,
> Save on a high and barren hill,
> An air of passing wind.
>
> All trees and simples, great and small,
> That balmy leaf do bear,
> Than they were painted on a wall,
> No more they move or stir.

On the high chalk downs, whose rounded bosses, in the springtime green as emerald, now have taken upon them somewhat of the tan of summer's sun, the great flocks are wandering, and the tinkle of sheep-bells (the music loved of shepherds) floats faintly down into the valleys. On these uplands, the soft summer's breeze sings at early morn and at even in the gorse, but at noon is silent, made dumb by the ambient sunshine.

But when the night-wind blows, it is scented with the perfume of gorse and upland flowers—wild thyme and briar and pinks,—and the shadows thrown by the moonlight chase each other across the hill-slopes, and the conies frisk and scuttle from the warren to the gorse, and from shade to twilight patches.

Over the valleys beneath comes the pall of a star-lit night, the scattered hamlets in the vale gradually fading from view ; and then yellow star-like lights blink at one from the windows of scattered farmhouses for a time,

and then all is again wrapt in the blue darkness of a summer's night.

At summer's dawn on the coast the grey waves break with a lazy music along the sandy shores, and with a more silvery song against the rocks and crags. And out at sea "the white-sailed ships dream on their shining way."

At the edge of the sea, white-winged gulls hover like unquiet spirits; but the beat of their wings is slower than at other seasons, and when they contend against the gale. By noon, the lazy summer sea has written its rippled story on the strand, which none human can read, for the wave-characters have a place in no language: they are the lettered notes of sea-music, sad or gay, as its mood may be.

Summer, the time of flowers and ripening corn, brings to Wessex gardens a blaze of colour, a riot of blossom which speaks of rich soil and pure air. Over the thatch of cottages climb roses red and white; along the tiny paths leading to porch and cottage door nod campanulas and roses, and the mingled scent of stocks, sweet peas, and lavender perfumes the air; whilst on either hand are wide-faced yellow sunflowers and upstanding spikes of red and white hollyhocks. In such gardens, instinct with colour, perfume, and beauty, is the concentrated joy of summer life, with the underlying song of bees and the twittered accompaniment of sparrows in the thatch. Many a Wessex garden is indeed a quiet bower, far from the noise of town—a spot full of sweet dreams, and health, and gently breathing peace.

Autumn brings many beauties to Wessex—exquisite

SUMMER IN WESSEX

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tints of foliage, beauty of cloud and shadows, glories of the lingering summer days. Along the winding lanes there is new charm. Overhead the green canopy has changed to one of yellow, russet, crimson, and browns of many shades, and underfoot the carpet of the dying year is thickening day by day. In the hedges the same story is told. Lingering blackberries give a sombre or a crimson note, and the scarlet of the wild rose's fruit flashes upon the wayfarer on every side. Creepers are "turning," and exquisite autumn tints are veining all leaves, Nature's rich pencilling for mortal's admiration. Summer flowers yet linger in the hedges, loth to go with the rest of summer's joys, and the pale forget-me-nots seem to be frailer still beside the brook and river.

In the orchards golden leaves are falling, to rival in their carpeting of greensward underneath the trees the beauty of that of spring; and boughs which bent with blossom are bending 'neath the russet and the sun-kissed crimson of the fruit.

In the wide fields the nodding corn, yellow-brown, is falling in the track of the reaping machine; but here and there comes still in Wessex the music of the sickle, and the rustle of falling swathes of heavy-headed grain. And amid the corn and behind the sweep of scythe are Wessex maids, busy to bind the fallen stalks, on whose cheeks, as Tom Hood wrote,

> An autumn flush
> Deeply ripened;—such a blush
> In the midst of brown was born,
> Like red poppies grown with corn.

Wessex

In the well-watered vales of Wessex the cattle roam at will amid the grass which is a rich aftermath. The river flows along less noisily than in the drought of summer days, now once more silvery grey and green where the weeds grow thick, in place of golden with the summer sunshine. The reeds are high along the banks, and they bend reluctantly beneath the flow of water, and the velvety brown spears of rushes nod gravely in the autumn breeze. The silvery green of the willows is now changed to pale gold, and at sundown, in this season of mists and mellow fruitfulness, diaphanous vapours enshroud the landscape.

On the uplands the breath of autumn has come : the bracken has put on its exquisite garments of brown, the gorse's golden glory is slowly fading, and the wild thyme no longer gives out its full perfume. At nights the flocks herd in the shelter of the gorse, for the night-wind blows chill. Below the downs the woods stretch, a blaze of orange, purple, and brown foliage, slowly thinning in the autumn wind.

> The year grows still again, the surging wake
> Of full-sailed summer folds its furrows up ;
> As after passing of an argosy
> Old silence settles back upon the sea,
> And ocean grows as placid as a cup.
> Spring the young morn, and Summer the strong noon,
> Have dreamed and done and died for Autumn's sake ;
> Autumn that finds not for a loss so dear
> Solace in stack and garner here too soon—
> Autumn, the faithful widow of the year.

In the coppices the nuts are falling earthward from

BERE HEATH IN AUTUMN, WITH GALLOWS HILL IN THE DISTANCE

The "Egdon Heath" of the Wessex Novels

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their husks, and the industrious and provident squirrels are already laying up their winter stores.

Here and there in cottage gardens under the hills roses linger amid autumn flowers—reminders of the summer that has gone into the past; and from the cottage chimneys the blue smoke of wood-fires curls—another signal that autumn is here.

William Barnes, the true poet of Wessex life, has pictured an autumn night:

> Now the light o' the west is a-turn'd to gloom,
> An' the men be at hwome vrom ground;
> An' the bells be a-zendèn all down the Coombe
> From tower their mwoansome sound.
> An' the wind is still,
> An' the house-dogs do bark,
> An' the rooks be a-vled to the elems high an' dark,
> An' the water do roar at mill.

The sea, too, which now surges on the Wessex shore o' nights with a dirge for the summer which has gone, has taken on its autumn tints. Now at dawn it is grey as a Puritan maiden's gown; at noon, grey-green as chrysoprase, not a wedding of amethyst and emerald; and at sunset a slaty blue, ominous of coming storms. Its voice upon the shore has altered too, and the listener for its music hears the low booming as of minute-guns—the diapason of the sea, or the harsh rattle of the shingle like "reeds" out of tune. Under the moon it is sullen and cold, and the unbroken fairy moon-track of summer has vanished.

But autumn in Wessex has a rare beauty both of foliage and of atmosphere, and Nature paints her clouds

at sunset with no niggardly hand. In the western sky is often a blaze of glory, a heightened echoing of that in woodland glade and hedgerow of the earth.

When winter comes, it is but to give another season to a year full of varied beauties. The dawn breaks red and flushes for a brief space the hills, ere permeating the sheltered vales beneath them with its roseate hue ; and seaward it turns the pale and ghostly chalk cliffs into things of pearly beauty.

Along the lanes, erstwhile a blaze of autumn glory overhead and leaf-carpeted beneath the feet, bare trees point skyward—their branches a black tracery against the pale winter firmament at dawn ; at eventide a weird tangle of half-lost shapes. Over the fields almost from sunrise to sunset hang blue-grey mists, torn now and again into fantastic forms as the winter's breeze comes across the hills or down the valley.

On the uplands is the great silence of winter. From the heights one can see fairy valleys emerging for the moment from their enveloping mists, to disclose the steel-grey ribbon which marks the course of the river. But all around is silence. Bullfinches no longer sing from the gorse bushes; larks no longer pierce the clouds and drop their strings of melody down to earth. Even the conies seem to have retired to their burrows from the chill of winter's dawn and winter's day.

In the vales the rush-grown river flows, swollen by rains and the inpourings of new-made brooks and rivulets, under a sullen sky ; the rushes, olive-green

and withered-brown, forming a thicket along its banks. In the meadows and in the pools, where the river has overflowed its banks or formed backwaters around the sharp curves, the birds of winter give the only element of life—agate-hued wild duck, dun-coloured plover, and long-billed snipe.

On the moors, not long ago ablaze with purple heather and gloriously golden with late-flowering gorse, there is a sombre beauty which the great novelist of Wessex has so often referred to—a beauty which pervades the heart of the wayfarer, and grips him with an emotion finely tuned to the vast silence of those lonely wastes. In winter, whether in daylight or in darkness, these illimitable moors are the abode of mists and tempests; at night becoming "the home of strange phantoms . . . . the hitherto unrecognised original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster, and are never thought of after the dream till revived by scenes like this."

Amid the stretches of olive-brown heather and whins, and stark and stunted trees, the tiny pools stare up at the grey and heavy sky like the dull, glazed eyes of mammoth beings stretched dead upon the wild.

Along the Wessex coast huge waves are surging—winter waves, hungry and sonorous. And in the sea-washed caves there is the booming organ-note of storm, carried miles inland by the rising gale. From the rocks, lashed by white crest of surges broken in their attacks upon the immovable, comes the sharper

music of a wailing note, half wind and half seething foam.

Winter has touched the sea with her darkling spell, and come are

> The strong, shouting days and nights that run,
> All white with stars, across the labouring ways
> Of billows warm with storm, instead of sun.
>
> . . . . . .

And as one stands upon the sea-girt heights

> By some tempestuous bay,
> What time the great sea waxes warm and white,
> And beats and blinds the following wind with spray—

the watcher feels the spell of winter's rude magnificence.

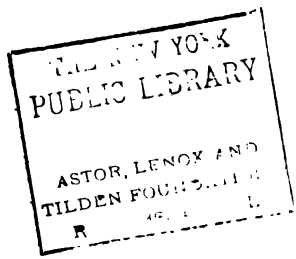
But its most beautiful aspect is when hoar-frost and snow come, turning the bare into the clothed with its bridal garment of white, and its sparkling jewels of rime; making the hedgerows, though stripped of foliage, one exquisite fairy-like tracery of soft whiteness.

Each blade of grass in the meadow is now a gemmed spear, brighter in the winter sunshine than any polished lance of knight of old. Along the roadside withered thistles and upstanding teasels are transformed into exquisite clusters of sparkling gems and fairy diadems. On the uplands the gorse is rime-laden and beautiful, with the fretted webs of spiders like the exquisite tracery of rose-windows set in the shining walls of some fairy palace.

In the valley, white and glistening beneath its mantle of hoar-frost, the little brooks are silent, and

BOCKHAMPTON BANK, NEAR DORCHESTER

The "Mellstock Lane" in *Under the Greenwood Tree*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the river flows slowly, and looking the blacker for its environing fringe of rime. Reeds and rushes, sedge and weed, are jewelled by Nature's profuse hand, and winter's beautiful garment enshrouds the land, vale and coppice and sloping pasture.

On the great stretches of moor, which lie beneath the winter's sun glistening with the exquisite sheen of frosted silver, the pools which lay dull under the lowering sky now glint like blinking eyes at the wayfarer, at night becoming steely mirrors under the pale-faced moon. Here and there a ruddy-breasted robin, "Christ's bird," carols on a gorse twig, or from the naked branch of some storm-beaten tree; but all the other voices of Nature are still.

But there is yet a fairer, purer beauty sometimes, when on moor and vale and coppice and hillside white snow-flakes have floated, blotting out all ugly things, all angles of Nature's architecture. Then it is a white world indeed that lies under the red winter sun—a world of snowy imagery beneath a mantle of unsullied purity.

Then at even

Burning logs, drawn from near-by copse and ancient wood,
Smoulder ruddy on the hearth,
And the flames send shadows dancing,
Keeping time to upward-flying sparks.
Whilst outside the winter wind is voicing
Dirge-like music of the dying day.

CHAPTER XI

A FAMOUS FAIR, AND SOME WESSEX TYPES

In olden days there were many fairs held in the various towns of Wessex, but nowadays such institutions are rapidly disappearing, not only in Wessex, but all over the Kingdom. There is, however, surviving almost in the centre of Thomas Hardy's Wessex the Fair held annually for two days in the third or fourth week in September at Bere Regis, the Kingsbere of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Far from the Madding Crowd.* This famous fair at Woodbury Hill, which played so important a part in the life of Bathsheba and Sergeant Troy in the latter novel, has in these days of change and fret fallen somewhat from the position of supreme importance which it once held in the estimation of dealers from so far west as Bath and Bristol, and so far east as Basingstoke and Reading. But fortunately for those who are interested in the survival of ancient customs and institutions, it still retains many of the features which have served to endear it in times past to the farm hands and their lasses, and still possesses some of the element of romance it had at the period when Mr

A Famous Fair

Hardy described it so vividly in *Far from the Madding Crowd.*

Woodbury Hill, the "Green Hill" of the novels, on the summit of which the Fair takes place, is an outstanding landmark for miles around, towering as it does some 250 feet above the level of the quaintly placed Bere Church and the depressed meadows, in which are a few fragments still remaining of the hunting-lodge once standing there belonging to King John. Up the steep road leading to the crown of this erstwhile British camp and Roman military station, for several days before the Fair, toil, amidst dust or mud ruts, as the weather be fine or wet, showmen's vans and trolleys laden with the disarticulated fragments of steam roundabouts, swing-boats, and "galloping horses." The gipsies, in picturesque tattered and weatherworn attire—which, alas! they lay aside on show-days for bastard finery and cheap velvets,—the drovers and horse-dealers (possibly horse-stealers also), come later, on the eve of the first day of the Fair or in the early morning of it.

Those who would see Woodbury Hill Fair, who would mix for a time with the people of the Wessex soil—many of them still quaint, unsophisticated folk save in horse-dealing, farm lore, and the judging of live stock—must be afoot in Bere Regis streets almost at day-dawn.

Ere the mist which rises from the little stream running, or perhaps one had better say meandering, near the foot of the slope on which the church stands, and still clings to the meads, has yet had time to dis-

sipate itself, along the roads from Blandford, Dorchester, Wareham, Wimborne, Salisbury, and even from places further afield, come flocks of sheep, stallions, cattle, and ponies.

Down Bere Regis main street—in truth there is but one to this quaint old-world townlet—in the growing light of a September dawn one hears the tramp and click of advancing horses, the crunching patter of passing sheep, the slouching gait of weary kine. Past the Drax Arms—unwontedly full and lively at this early hour—they go, and thence, amid a smother of flinty dust, away up the steep road to Woodbury Hill.

"Good marnin'; where beest thee a-goin'?"

"'Ow be you?"

"Nicely, thank' ee," and similar phrases come from the roadway outside the inn, varied by an occasional, and shriller, woman's note:

"Who'd a thought o' seein' yew!" or "Well I never, 'ere ye be agin t' year!"

A rough but not altogether unmusical guffaw is the sole audible reply to the latter remark, though a "Doan't ee, now! Do leave I alone!" in a woman's tones serves to throw some light upon the nature of the greeting.

Up the hill a few hours later a stream of country folk from far and near—farmers and their wives and sons and daughters; strangers who have come to see the fun—advance, either by the road or by a steep ascent afforded by a short cut. If by the latter, when viewed from a little distance they look like ants.

Stiles are clambered over with a rural recklessness of

BERE REGIS

The "Kingsbere" of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

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immodest disclosures made in so doing by the strapping Wessex wenches. A torn dress, a violent plunge downwards into the not unwilling arms of attendant swain, who stands expectant and clad in a "pepper-and-salt" suit of West of England tweed, being the cause of unbridled and long-continued merriment.

"Aow Joe do squeeze 'er!"

"Do 'ee leave go o' me!"

"You'm a-squeezin' I t' death!" and similar exclamations serve to punctuate the laughter.

On the top of the hill—on which, tradition asserts, a pedlar some time prior to Henry III.'s day, overtaken by a storm, when the rain ceased, spread out his stock on his cloak to dry, and did so good a trade with the country folk that he came again year by year, and thus founded the Fair—the fair-goers soon gather thick.

By this time drovers have penned their sheep, got their cattle into the spaces allotted for them, and the various showmen are busily engaged in putting the finishing touches to their arrangements for affording the holiday-makers amusement. Then, as the crowd increases to a remunerative extent, the first strident notes of brazen-lunged steam organs located beneath the gaudy gold, green, and red canopies of the roundabouts break the silence and float, mercifully softened, down into the townlet itself.

Half an hour or so of yokel indecision, and then the "galloping horses," swing-boats, and merry-go-rounds fill up, and the raucous voices of their proprietors grow less insistent in their exhortations for the crowd

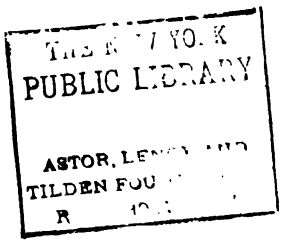
to spend a penny on "all of the fun of the Fair." The poses assumed by the Sallies, Janes, and Susans may not be over-sedate or elegant; but they are eloquent of bucolic ease and enjoyment. And if "Willyum" does press Sairey's ample waist too closely for good manners, her satisfied smile and his rapturously vacant gaze do much to take off the edge of any impropriety.

Around the swing-boats and kindred joys are bandied broad Dorset jokes which would look strange in print —humour racy of the soil, but perhaps somewhat unfit for modern susceptibilities; witticisms bred of the promiscuity of farm life; asides which would bring blushes to less sun-burnt cheeks than those of rustic maidens. Into the decrepit building, which stands from year to year on the summit of the hill, defying weather and time's ravages bred of desertion—once inhabited, but it would appear now merely used as a beer-house at fair times—go red-faced, thirsty souls of both sexes in search of cider and "four" ale, possessed apparently of an infinite capacity for enjoying and imbibing both. From the interior of this house come snatches of songs in dialect—strange, soft, buzzing words punctuated by fragments of music-hall ditties picked up from travelling showmen or on stray visits to the larger towns.

Toward the edge of the hill, where these half-ruined habitations are thickest, on the sloping and uneven green sward are cantering, galloping, plunging, or kicking hacks, ponies, cart-horses, and farmers' cobs,

THE CHURCH AT BERE REGIS

"Kingsbere" Church in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*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surrounded by a crowd of eager critics and cautious buyers, who sway hither and thither in humorous and feigned affright, in avoiding the restive animals which are being trotted round for inspection.

Here, alas! nowadays are to be found but few of the old types. Fustian-clad and gaitered farmers are now being fast replaced by smartly attired gentlemen who have their clothes from Bath or even "Lunnon." The old-time drovers, too, are few and far between, and in their picturesque place stand mostly merely shabby farm hands or well-clothed but un-ideal dealers.

Back to the main street of the Fair: along it hustles a motley crowd. On either side are stalls gay with crimson-coloured "rock" done up in strawboard cartons, gingerbread covered with "hundreds and thousands," cheap china, gaily painted whips and rattles, men's braces, "warranted strong" or "extra strong," boots and shoes of appalling blackness, women's clothes, with blouses warranted to fit—so hucksters declare—any figure, pea-nuts, and such modern wares as lady "teasers" for use at sundown when the fun gets fast and furious, scent-squirts (which the girls seem to appreciate when emptied over them or down their necks by some bold swain), and even confetti!

"Buy! buy! buy!" sings out a red-faced man selling brushes and combs at what appears to be an alarming sacrifice. "You'm not agoin' to say no to 'onest Jack! Look 'e 'ere, vive combs and a brush for a shillin', and hall guaranteed. What ho! There, missus, you'm got a bargin."

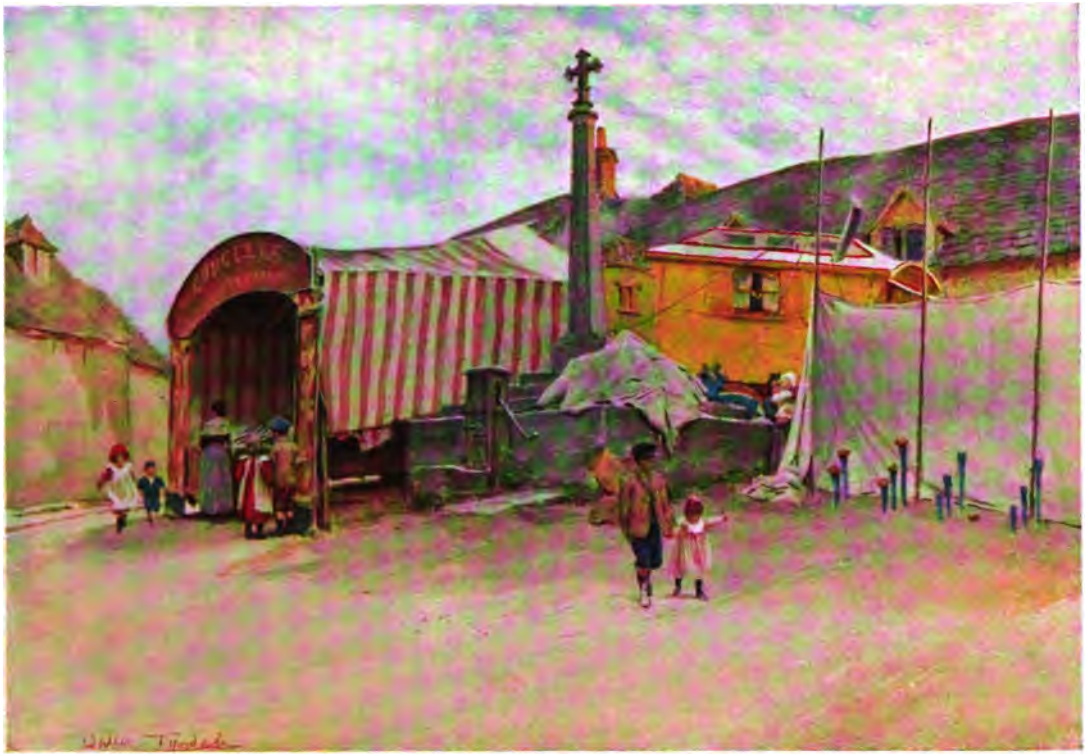
This last remark to a stout lady with four or five children in her train, as she pushes through the outskirts of the crowd and becomes the possessor of the brush stuck full of combs.

A little further down the street of stalls is ranged a row of life-size figures — the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Japan, General Kuropatkin, General Noji, the Grand Dukes, the Emperor of Germany, Joseph Chamberlain, and other celebrities — grinning open-mouthed; and in front of them a crowd of little less open-mouthed country folk. In the faces of some of the dolls are stuck clay pipes, and the lucky adventurer who can throw a wooden ball between the grinning jaws can (in the words of the proprietor) "taike 'is chice of enyfink hon the stall"; for the proprietor is from "Lunnon," and the stall bears above its gaily coloured awning the mendacious announcement, "Patronised by the Royal Family."

To the left is a circus and menagerie—a travel-worn canvas tent surmounted above the entrance by weather-worn representations in once gaudy colours of the attractions within. It must have been in some such tent as this that the redoubtable Sergeant Troy is described in *Far from the Madding Crowd* as giving his sensational performances of Dick Turpin.

Outside the tent a disreputable specimen of "The Pelican of the Wilderness" is struggling with the lady who takes the money, to the immense delight of a small crowd. The lady wishes the bird to sit on the big drum and make himself agreeable to the people;

A CORNER OF A WESSEX FAIR



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the pelican wishes to get inside and dress for his part of the performance. Savage pecks at the lady's skirts and side-rushes to get round her, however, avail him nothing: clasped by his sinuous neck, he is at last perched on the drum, but only for a moment or two. The sound of the "unrivalled orchestra," consisting of a fiddle, trombone, and a cornet, within fires him to fresh endeavours, and this time he hops down, and, making an insolent peck at the lady's well-displayed ankles, succeeds in escaping within the booth.

At the end of the lane of stalls and to the left is a show such as used to be more frequent in bygone times. Outside runs a narrow platform on which stands a red-faced man alternately thumping a huge drum and banging a copper disc suspended from a pole, which serves as a clangorous gong. A child is giving illustrations of step-dancing and high kicking, whilst two women in tights and brief, heavily spangled skirts pirouette before the gaping crowd.

"Walk up! Walk up! Only tuppence to see the mysteries and marvels," cries the showman.

No one, however, moves.

The Dorset labourer and his lass are much like sheep: they are inclined rather to follow the example of others than take the initiative themselves. The red-faced man exhorts one of the young ladies to greater energy in pirouetting. The crowd gapes more, and makes trenchant criticisms upon the young lady's figure and attire. A man at the other end of the platform turns the handle of an organ, and amid waltzing,

drum-thumping, cymbal-banging, and loud-voiced entreaties, at last a hobbledehoy of fifteen, fishing out his tuppence from the depths of his corduroy trousers pocket, slouches forward somewhat shamefaced, and clumsily climbs the steps.

More banging, more vociferations regarding the mysteries within to be seen for only tuppence; a reference to some "earth" men whose horrid presentments are painted on canvas and hung outside; and the stream is started which soon fills the limited capacity of the tent.

Amongst other entertainments and shows are the double-headed lady—an illusion which would scarcely take in the most innocent of yokels,—a chicken with three heads (born in the county), and other freaks in which the people appear to delight. There used to be also the loud-voiced, red-faced, and jolly-looking gentlemen who, with small tables in front of them, invited Hodge to predict under which thimble the pea would be found. These must have done a good trade, for even Hodge possesses the speculative instinct which leads him to reckless prophecy on the chance of "making something."

Then as the afternoon wears on little groups of country folk seat themselves on the slopes which overlook the picturesque townlet away down in the hollow of the valley, and talk over old times, and express the opinion that the Fair is not what it once was.

At sundown, when the blue September shadows commence to enshroud the vast stretches of Bere Heath

MORETON, DORSET

The village near Talbothays, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*

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away to the south of the hill—the famous Egdon Heath before mentioned—and the twinkling lights of the little townlet shine out one by one like glowworms in the vale, the fun becomes more furious.

Amid all the solitude of the vales which radiate from the base of Woodbury Hill, high above them is this thronged camp of ancient Briton and conquering Roman, seething with the free, frank, and bucolic merriment of thousands of Wessex folk. The booths and stalls, lit with naphtha flares, present a weird, uncanny picture; whilst down the hillside slowly and cautiously creep lights, shaking on the road and disappearing to reappear like fire-flies, hung on the vehicles of quieter folk who are wending their homeward way early.

From the vale below, this immense hill, blue-grey in the oncoming gloom of night, lit with a canopy of yellow radiance, seems like some huge pagan altar; and the hoarse murmur of the throng floats down to the listener in the meads like the distant roar of a sacrificing host.

CHAPTER XII

SOME LESSER TOWNS AND VILLAGES OF THOMAS HARDY'S NOVELS

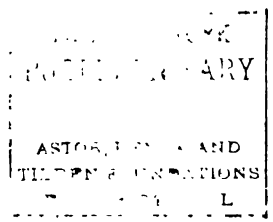
No book upon the subject of Wessex could be held even to approach completeness without some reference to those towns and villages which, many of them of little importance in themselves, and some situated in counties other than Dorset, have yet gained interest and fame from the fact of their having been made the locale of Mr Hardy's novels and tales.

The term "Wessex" in his works conforms with fair accuracy to its use historically, and on occasion transcends it, comprising in its area a portion of Cornwall, and parts of Devon in the west, of Somerset and Wilts to the north-west and north, and a few towns and villages in Hampshire, Berkshire, and Oxfordshire to the east and north-east of his native county.

The larger towns of Dorset, and those in other counties we have mentioned, nearly all of which have been the scene of some novel or poem, have already been dealt with—Dorchester, the Casterbridge of that impressive but gloomy story, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and other tales;

WOOL MANOR HOUSE

The "Wellbridge" Manor House in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the scene of her honeymoon with Angel Clare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Weymouth, the Budmouth Regis of that fine and stirring romance of Napoleonic times, *The Trumpet-Major*, and the fantastic tale, *The Well-Beloved*; Bridport, the Port Bredy of the Wessex tale, *Fellow-Townsmen*; Wareham, the Anglebury of *The Return of the Native* and *The Hand of Ethelberta*; Poole, the Havenpool of the story, *To Please his Wife*; Wimborne, the Warborne of *Two on a Tower*; Corfe Castle, the Corvesgate Castle of *The Hand of Ethelberta*; Sherborne, the Sherton Abbas of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and of *The Woodlanders*; Shaftesbury, the Shaston (here Mr Hardy uses the true and ancient name of the place) of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*; Blandford, the Shotsford Forum of *Far from the Madding Crowd*; and Winchester, associated with poor Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and the sombre and impressive ending of that wonderful book, and the story, *Lady Mottesfont.*

In these towns Mr Hardy has found fitting and singularly effective backgrounds for the action of his tragic and humorous stories. He never recklessly tears a character from out its native environment.

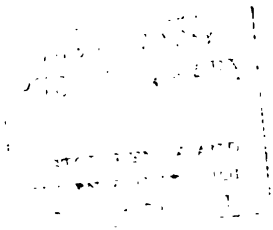
In the wider Wessex of the smaller villages which lie hid in the heart of this fertile land, Mr Hardy has not only found opportunity for the exercise of his unrivalled powers of brilliant and picturesque description, but it is also from them that he has drawn many of his most convincing and interesting characters. The small portion of the county of Somerset which has fallen within the confines of Mr Hardy's Wessex, by reason

of the excursions of several of his characters into it, is a beautiful stretch of country, amid which are scattered picturesque cottages and farmhouses, many of them substantially built of yellow stone. The countryside is noted for its beautiful churches, and scarcely a village of any size exists without its own venerable and interesting building. In many of Mr Hardy's characters who happen to be Somerset folk we can almost catch the softer accent than prevails with their immediate neighbours over the border in Dorset. The "a" is less broad, whilst the "s" has been transmuted into "z." On the margin of the two counties one finds the form of speech still obtaining amongst the peasant and working classes which has been woven into several of Fielding's novels.

Amongst the Somerset towns and villages which appear in the Wessex novels or tales, Yeovil, the Ivell of the novels and of the stories, *The Tragedy of Two Ambitions* and *For Conscience' Sake*, is a town of some importance. It possesses a fine church of the Perpendicular period and is picturesquely situated upon the hillside above the river Yeo, from which its name is derived.

In the immediate neighbourhood are many historic seats of unusual interest, including Montacute, with its beautiful garden of terraced walks and magnificent hall, which have remained almost unaltered from the days of Queen Elizabeth; whilst near Langport is the estate which was bequeathed to the elder Pitt by an eccentric baronet named Sir William Pynsent, with fine

COKER'S, FROME: A TYPICAL DORSET DAIRY HOUSE



views northward to Bridgewater and southward over successive ranges of low hills.

Brimton, the home of Sir Spencer Ponsonby Fane, is of various dates, a quaint Inigo Jones garden-front contrasting with a chantry house built before the reign of Henry VII.

From Langport north-eastwards to Frome lies a beautiful stretch of country, with the Mendip Hills sending their eastward spurs within ten miles or so of the latter town, busy with its cloth manufactures and standing on a steep slope, with its main streets climbing the hill. The church is rather florid in parts, and it was not only restored by the well-known Ritualistic vicar, the Rev. W. J. E. Bennett, but possesses a remarkable Calvary also set up by him.

Hard by Yeovil is Melbury Park, the principal scene of the short story, *The First Countess of Wessex*, therein disguised by Mr Hardy as King's Hintock; near by the Falls Park of that story is the exquisitely situated ruin of Nunney Castle, once besieged by Fairfax himself. Under High Stoy lies the Little Hintock of *The Woodlanders*, which Mr Hardy so tersely but adequately describes as "one of those sequestered spots outside the gate of the world where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation." This little village lies amongst lofty hills and deep hollows, which, though adding to its picturesqueness, serve to shut it in from the outside world.

Of other villages which have assumed importance from the fact of their being the locale of Mr Hardy's

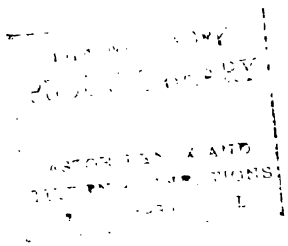
stories, there are quite a number southward from Yeovil. Many of them, as can well be understood, are in the immediate neighbourhood of Dorchester. The little village of Puddletown, with its interesting church, Jacobean gallery, and fine Norman font, is the Weatherbury of *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and the heroine Bathsheba's farm is Lower Waterston, which Mr Hardy for the purpose of the story transplanted a short distance. His description of this once manor, now farm house, which was so vivid and true when he wrote the story, is applicable to it still. It is "a hoary building of the Jacobean stage of Classical Renaissance, as regards its architecture, and of a proportion which tells at a glance that, as is frequently the case, it has once been the manorial hall on a small estate round it."

Not far from Puddletown is Milton Abbas, which Mr Hardy calls Middleton Abbey in *The Woodlanders*, with Milton Park, containing that magnificent survival of ancient times, the abbey church, close alongside the mansion which was built for Lord Dorchester in 1771 by Sir William Chambers, who was also the architect of Somerset House.

Southward lies an old house, at Milborne St Andrew's, nowadays set in a waste of sparsely timbered park, associated with that strange, elusive character, Lady Constantine, which Mr Hardy created for his heroine in *Two on a Tower*—an indiscreet and subtly emotional woman who is at first merely æsthetically interested in the beauty of the astronomical youth

PUDDLETOWN

The 'Weatherbury" in *Far from the Madding Crowd*



whom she accidentally found in possession of the tower on her estate. The house and tower, where so much of Lady Constantine's and Swithin St Cleeve's courting was done, are, as most people know, a blend of the mansion and tower situated near Charborough with the house here, and column standing on a fir-shrouded hilltop near at hand. But although Mr Hardy has amalgamated the two places in the manner we have stated, his description of the one standing amid the trees at Milborne St Andrew's, or, as he has renamed the place, Millpond St Jude's, is wonderfully true to facts. Mr Hardy writes: "The gloom and solitude which prevailed round the base were remarkable; . . . . some boughs and twigs rubbed the pillars' side or occasionally clicked in touching each other. The sob of the environing trees was here expressly manifest. Below the level of their summits the masonry was lichen-stained and mildewed, for the sun never pierced the moaning cloud of blue-black vegetation." It is around this tower that Mr Hardy has woven one of his most romantic stories, and the old Welland House, with its pretty garden and ancient overthrown gateways at the entrance to the former park, is well worth a visit from those who love the picturesque.

Not far from this secluded spot is what may truly be called "the Land of Tess," for although Mr Hardy made poor, tragic Tess's wanderings extend as far north-west as Salisbury Plain, and north-east as far as the New Forest and Winchester, her life's story, the scenes of it, and their enactment, in the greater part

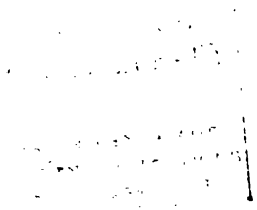
lie within comparatively narrow confines. The story commences in the pretty little village of Marnhull, named by Mr Hardy Marlott, which lies but a few miles south-west of Shaftesbury, and from whence Tess journeys to Pentridge, a quaint little village which Mr Hardy names Trantridge, to take service with the mother of her eventual seducer and evil genius, Alick D'Urberville.

The scenes of the story then shift in turn to the beautiful Blackmore Vale and the vale of "the great dairies," where Tess takes service at Talbothays with dairyman Crick, meeting whilst living there Angel Clare, the gentleman-dairyman, who from thence onwards becomes the central figure in Tess's *little* drama. From Talbothays, which has been by some writers identified with a farm at Moreton, although actually compounded of at least two places, as is so frequently the custom of Mr Hardy, Tess and Angel Clare, who married her, come to Wool, the Wellbridge of the story; and in the ancient manor-house set amid pasture land, and almost with the water of the Frome lapping against its walls, their all too brief honeymoon, shattered by Tess's confession of her early misfortune, is spent. It is here too that the powerful scene is enacted when Angel Clare carries Tess across the fields at dead of night and places her in the *ancient* stone coffin of one of Bindon's abbots in the grounds of the old Cistercian abbey across the river, close to the ancient mill.

Wool itself, though picturesque, and through the

BINDON ABBEY MILL

Where Angel Clare proposed to learn milling, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*



summer often resorted to by artists, is naught but a small straggling village set a few yards away from the railway, and of little interest save that with which Mr Hardy has invested it by making it the locale of some of the finest scenes in his great novel. In the old manor house, gloomy with its mouldy greatness, standing just over the ancient Elizabethan bridge spanning the river, Mr Hardy found a fit and at the same time singularly appropriate place for the mutual confessions of Angel Clare and his wife. Those who have passed within its ancient doors seem to breathe the atmosphere of the story, and to realise with greater vividness the weakness of the man's character, his one-sided logic, and the piteous trust and weakness of the woman. It is easy to feel Tess's loneliness as Clare (in the story), closing the door softly behind him, goes out into the blackness of the night, well matching in its sinister gloom his own thoughts.

When Tess's brief romance of the honeymoon is ended, she returns home once more to Marlott, and then after a time renews her struggle for existence, with Angel Clare away in Brazil, by field work on a farm at Flintcomb Ash (Nettlecombe Tout), where she remains till the re-appearance of her tempter, Alick D'Urberville, and the death of her father.

Then the scene of the story once more shifts to one of those strange half-dead townlets, so many of which Mr Hardy has immortalised in his novels, Bere Regis, or, as he calls it, Kingsbere, where lay the "skeletons" of those D'Urbervilles whose departed glories had had

so prejudicial an influence on the Durbeyfield family in general. The half-dead village of Kingsbere nestles beneath Woodbury Hill, on which is annually held the fair we have already described.

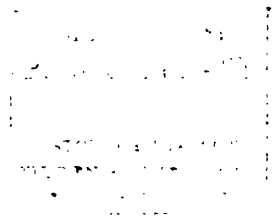
From Kingsbere the scene shifts with great rapidity to Sandbourne, by which name Mr Hardy has disguised Bournemouth; and it is at this fashionable watering-place that the great tragedy of the whole book is worked out: Alick D'Urberville's death at the hands of Tess, which tragic end few readers can have deplored. After which Angel Clare and his erring wife flee out of the town, and, eluding justice for some time, are eventually "taken" amid the "immense stones of the sacrificial temple of past ages" on Salisbury Plain.

It is to Winchester that Mr Hardy takes Tess for the last sad scene of her tragic life; and it is from the top of the great western hill behind the upward slope of the High Street that 'Liza Lu, Tess's sister, and Angel Clare watch for the signal upon the ugly flat-topped octagonal tower, upon the cornice of which a tall flag-staff was erected.

With noticeable restraint, Mr Hardy hastens over this scene in Winchester; but hasten though he may, his artistry is such that nothing which can make for impressiveness or solemnity is omitted. He says: "Upon the cornice of the tower there was a tall staff. Their ('Liza Lu's and Angel Clare's) eyes were riveted on it. A few minutes after the hour had struck something moved slowly up the staff and extended itself upon the breeze. It was a black flag.

WOOL

The "Wellbridge" of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*



"The two speechless gazers bent themselves down to the earth, as if in prayer. . . . . The flag continued to wave silently.

"Justice was done, and the President of the Immortals (in Æschylean phrase) had ended his sport with Tess."

So ends what many critics, as well as numbers of other readers, contend is Mr Hardy's *magnum opus.*

To the south of Weymouth lies the strange peninsula which Mr Hardy refers to in his elusive and fantastical but interesting story, *The Well-Beloved*, as the "Isle of Slingers" or the "Gibraltar of Wessex." By these names is known to the lovers of Mr Hardy's works the jutting piece of rocky coast marked on the map as Portland. At one time it was probably an island, and indeed is still known as such, although it is now connected indisseverably with the coast by the famous Chesil Beach. Mr Hardy's own description of it as seen from a distance is one which is singularly Hardyesque, just as it is equally singularly vivid and appropriate. He says it "stretches out like the head of a bird into the English Channel"; and he goes on to tell us, in describing the town of Portland, how "the towering rock, the houses above houses, one man's doorstep rising above his neighbour's chimney, the gardens hung up by one edge to the sky, the vegetables on apparently almost vertical planes, the unity of the whole island as a solid and single block of limestone four miles long," form an impressive and unique picture.

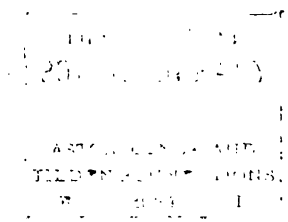
The natives of this strange excrescence on the Dorset coast, which has been identified with the ancient Vindilia of Roman days, are still a peculiar people, with a somewhat pronounced dislike to "Kimberlins" or foreigners. As in other stories, Portland in the pages of *The Well-Beloved* becomes a clear and interesting district, "for centuries immemorial the home of a curious and almost distinctive people, cherishing strange beliefs and singular customs." And one of the curious customs, which at any rate some forty years ago survived in the island, forms one of the most important and dramatic incidents of the fantastic story. Into this tale of wayward and successive loves Mr Hardy has put some of his most etching-like and beautiful descriptions, and readers are able to forgive much of the slightness of the tale for the sake of the pictures of atmospheric effects and of scenery which accompany it.

There are scenes of *The Well-Beloved* also placed in Budmouth Regis and in London; but it is the Portland setting, with its clear-cut descriptive passages, which makes the story of interest in spite of its slightness.

Cranborne, which is known in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* as Chaseborough, with its wonderful Chase, is one of those small, half-forgotten towns of which there are so many in Wessex. The manor house, over the doorway of which are the figures of Justice and Mercy, was once used as a court, where the hardy and often desperate poachers of the Chase used to appear on trial. The wonderful and romantic woodland known as Cranborne

LULWORTH COVE

The "Lullstead Cove" in *Far from the Madding Crowd*, *Life's Little Ironies*, etc.



Chase, though much less in extent than in former times, still contains some magnificent oaks and yews, for which it has always been renowned in forestry; and at Rushmore lived the late General Pitt-Rivers, the indefatigable excavator of British and Roman remains in south-western Wilts.

Lulworth Cove, under the thin disguise of Lulstead Cove, situated on the coast some few miles east of Weymouth, is a spot of singular beauty, quietude, and charm, with the old castle, the seat of the Weld family, standing some mile or so inland from the exquisite little cove itself. At Lulworth are laid several of the scenes in Mr Hardy's first-published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, and in the same novel appears the little village of Tolpuddle, under the thin disguise of Tolchurch.

In the fine story, *Under the Greenwood Tree*, which is notable for some of the finest of all Mr Hardy's descriptive writing, as well as for a singularly full gallery of rustic portraits, appear the little villages of Upper and Lower Melstock, under which name Mr Hardy has disguised Stinsford, which is quite close to his home at Dorchester.

Of all Mr Hardy's stories, few contain so excellent a range of rustic characters or are so rich in rustic and truly Dorset humour. Stinsford lies sequestered, as many another village selected by Mr Hardy for the scene of his stories. But from its native picturesqueness it is well worth while for the traveller in Wessex to turn down the by-lane off the main road from Dorchester to visit the pictur-

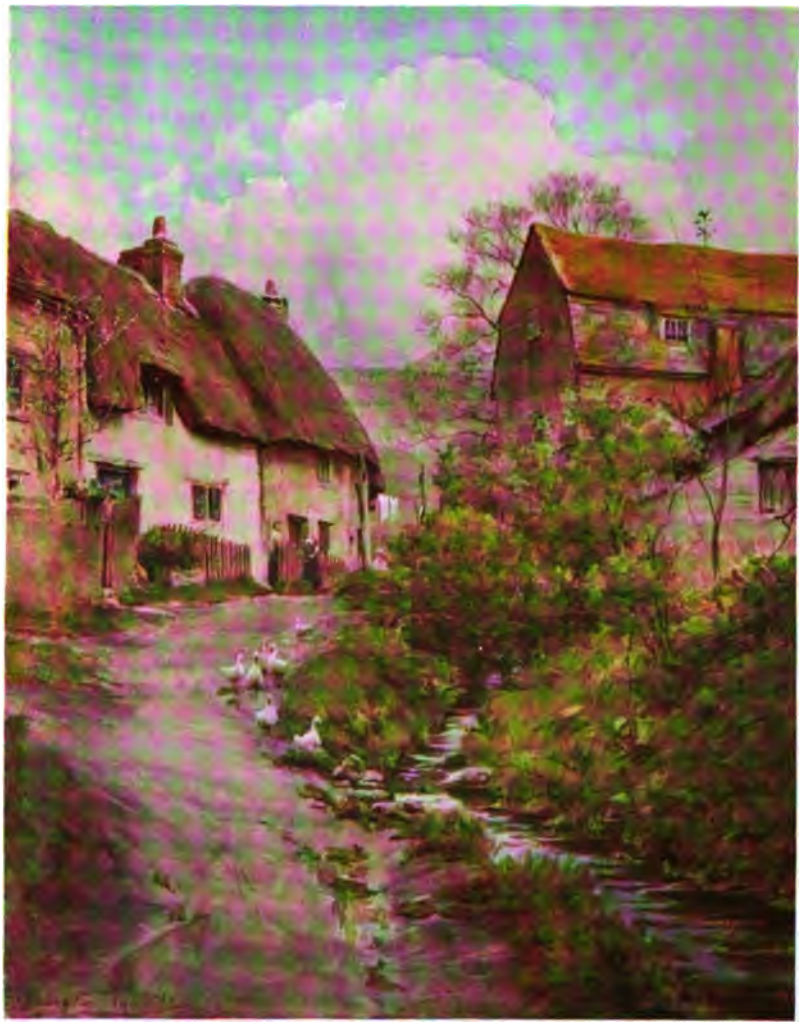
esque church, and also to imagine where Tranter Dewy, that quaint character in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, lived; where the Fiddler of the Reels—Mop Ollamore—who has been made by Mr Hardy the subject of a short story, lived; or which of the thatched roofs sheltered at his birth unhappy "Jude the Obscure." *Under the Greenwood Tree* has been called the "Story of the Old Village Choirs," and it forms a valuable contribution to local history, and an interesting record of fast-dying types and characters. In certain villages the last of these old choirs, with wheezing "reeds" and "thin" strings, did not become extinct till some fifteen or twenty years ago; and they are even nowadays sometimes revived when organs fail—as, indeed, has been the case at Puddletown, the Weatherbury of the novels, as these words are being written.

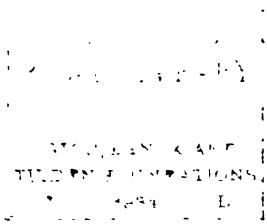
In very few of Mr Hardy's stories does he travel far outside the immediate confines of Dorset; but in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* he takes the reader as far afield as Cornwall, laying several of the scenes of that romance at Boscastle, which he calls Castle Boterel; Launceston, disguised as St Launces; and the village of St Juliots, otherwise Endlestow.

In that fine romance, *The Trumpet-Major*, with its echo of the stir and the stress of the times of the Napoleonic wars, the little village of Sutton Poyntz, nestling amid the hills a short distance inland from Weymouth Bay, and disguised by Mr Hardy under the name of Overcombe, plays a scarcely less important part than the neighbouring town of Weymouth

THE MILL COTTAGES AT SUTTON POYNTZ

The "Overcome" of *The Trumpet-Major*





(Budmouth Regis) itself. One of the most picturesque villages of southern Dorset, Sutton Poyntz is nowadays a favourite resort of artists, and in selecting this retired spot for the theatre of his stirring romance Mr Hardy showed that unerring sense of contrast which, without violence of diction or of action, has so often proved such a wonderful counterfoil to the more stirring of the incidents in his stories.

Sutton Poyntz is much what it was when the possible invasion of Bonaparte was stirring the south of England from end to end, and causing old wives, children, yeomen, and rustics sleepless nights and harassing days. The present mill is not that of Miller Loveday and his lodgers, for Mr Hardy transported, as has often been his custom, Upwey Mill from its actual site to Sutton Poyntz, a spot of greater picturesqueness or effectiveness.

In only one of Mr Hardy's long stories has he travelled outside Wessex in its widest sense, and placed his scenes upon the Continent. And in this story, *A Laodicean*, the opening scenes of which are laid at Stancy Castle (vaguely, Dunster), and then transferred to other Continental resorts, one is forced to the conclusion that Mr Hardy has travelled not altogether successfully outside the land he has made so indisputably his own.

We have left till last a mention of the places in which are laid the scenes of Mr Hardy's last-published story, *Jude the Obscure*. Around this novel, in which people have been wrongly led to trace scraps of personal history, has raged even more controversy than

formerly was provoked by *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. The novel, it must be admitted, is one of almost unrelieved gloom ; and powerful and interesting though it undoubtedly is, it has never, we believe, been a favourite with the general public. The opening scenes of *Jude the Obscure*, which has been described as a story of "mixed loves and thwarted ambitions," are laid in the pretty little village of Fawley Magna, which Mr Hardy calls Marygreen, resting, as he himself says, "in the lap of an upland adjoining the undulating North Wessex downs."

From this secluded village, "as old-fashioned as it was small," unhappy Jude proceeded to Christminster (Oxford) with the ambition of obtaining a good education. From thence the scene of the story is transferred to Melchester (Salisbury), where Jude goes with the intention of taking Holy Orders. Here it is that his chance of such a consummation of his wishes is wrecked by philandering with Sue Bridehead. The other scenes of this novel are laid in Shaftesbury (Shaston), where still stands the house, Old Grove's Place, with its Georgian panelling, from the window of which Sue jumped. Of this house, which stands just beyond Bimport, Sue said : "It is so antique and dismal that it depresses me dreadfully ; such houses are very well to visit but not to live in. I feel crushed into the earth by the weight of so many previous lives there spent." And it is the note of despair similar to that experienced by Sue at Old Grove's Place that is the predominant one of this strange and fascinating though gloomy book.

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Of the other spots mentioned casually by Mr Hardy in his collections of short stories, *Wessex Tales* and *A Group of Noble Dames*, it is impossible to speak. Many of them have already been referred to in the foregoing pages, whilst others lie scattered as secluded hamlets or mere landmarks throughout the length and breadth of the land which he has made his own.

Mr Hardy's place in the very front rank of modern English authors was long ago accorded him by the critical and the intelligent reader. It is no small satisfaction to those who care most for what is best in English literature of the higher and least meretricious type to know that the circle of his admirers is an ever-widening one, and that, in a word, he has at last "come to his own."

Of the debt which future historians and students, for whom local customs, habits, and types of rustic character and the like are a matter of interest, owe him, those who know Wessex well can best speak. In his books he has touched in with the unerring pen of a master portraits of country folk fast becoming extinct, and pictures of rural scenes which unhappily are yearly being altered by the advance of civilisation.

But still happily many stretches of fair country within the confines of Wessex are unscarred and unspoiled by the energy or recklessness of moderns; and those who seek to know what rural England was fifty years ago, and what lovely English scenery may still be, can yet do so by a visit to "fayre Wessex."

THE END

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